Democrats nominate Hakeem Jeffries for Speaker: A proven servant of the capitalist oligarchy

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At a closed-door meeting Wednesday morning, the Democratic Party members of the incoming Congress voted overwhelmingly to nominate Representative Hakeem Jeffries as the next Speaker of the House, the most powerful legislative position in Congress and second in line of succession to the presidency. The vote was by 251 to 11, with two who did not vote, in a secret ballot. A final vote in the House of Representatives will take place in January.

Jeffries rejected a proposed voice vote, such as that which installed Nancy Pelosi as Speaker-designate in 2006, even though no candidate was nominated to run against him. He wanted a count. Its purpose was to show that the Democratic Party overwhelmingly repudiates the oppositional sentiment expressed in the election that brought it to power.

According to the AP, "Phone calls and social media posts have been flooding the offices of Democrats and the newly elected, demanding a fresh start." Jeffries answered with a tally of 251 to 11. It was a message to Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus that the incoming majority will not be guided by the people who voted for it.

The vote is of a piece with everything the Democrats have done since November 3. Jeffries declared the party "ready, willing and able to find bipartisan common ground." He told *Morning Joe* that "the American people don't want us to get even" and has explicitly opposed moves to impeach Trump. Since then, Democrats have let the impeachment of Hegseth be buried and attacked Trump from the right on China. Schumer voted to advance a deregulation bill that Trump said he was "100 percent behind."

Six of the 11 Democrats who voted against Jeffries put out a joint statement with a seventh member-elect, who missed the vote because of illness. Far from defending their "no" votes, they presented them as a bargaining chip. "We have worked to secure commitments from Leader Jeffries in good-faith conversations," they wrote, and they reported "meaningful progress." All seven are newly elected, and five are members of the DSA.

The best-known DSA figure in the House, Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, publicly supported the elevation of the House minority leader, saying, "There is one candidate in this race: Hakeem Jeffries."

Mayor Zohran Mamdani, also a DSA member, declared his support for Jeffries as Speaker a year ago and reaffirmed it in August, after Jeffries' private meeting with Jared Kushner. It was Mamdani who persuaded the New York City DSA last November not to endorse Council Member Chi Ossé, a DSA member who had filed to challenge Jeffries in his Brooklyn district. Ossé withdrew days later.

The elevation of Jeffries, who has a lengthy record as an unswerving defender of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, demonstrates that, despite the illusions peddled by the DSA, the Democratic Party cannot be pushed to the left or transformed into a vehicle to defend the interests of the working class. It is a party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus, whose ruthless defense of corporate interests is summed up in the figure of Jeffries.

The nomination of Jeffries has been accompanied, predictably, by a celebratory media barrage about the impending "historic" election of the first black Speaker of the House. Jeffries will become the first black Speaker. His deputy Katherine Clark of Massachusetts will become the first female Majority Leader. The third-ranking Democrat, Pete Aguilar of California, will become the first Hispanic Majority Whip. The fourth-ranking Democrat, Ted Lieu, will be the first Asian American caucus chair. And on and on.

None of these individuals, by virtue of their various identities, represents the interests of the working class. There are black, Hispanic and female members of the financial aristocracy; black, Hispanic and female corporate CEOs, military officers, spies and assassins.

The Democratic Party has already produced the first black president (Obama), who was the first to wage war every day of his presidency; the first female, black and Asian American vice president (Harris), known for her hardline tactics as San Francisco prosecutor and California Attorney General; the first female Speaker (Pelosi, likely the wealthiest person ever to hold that office); and countless "first" black senators, congressmen, governors and mayors. The decisive question is

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not the skin color, gender or ethnicity of a political figure but what program they espouse and what class interests they are committed to defend.

As for Jeffries, his record as a political hack goes back to the Brooklyn Democratic machine, which sent him to Albany in 2006 and to Congress in 2012. The first reference to Jeffries in the *World Socialist Web Site* came in 2017 when he backed the ouster of John Conyers, then the "dean" of black congressmen, over sexual misconduct allegations. A year later, he won his first position in the leadership, as chairman of House Democratic Caucus, defeating another senior black representative, Barbara Lee of California, the only member of Congress to cast a vote against the Authorization for Use of Military Force of September 14, 2001.

In the course of his 14 years in the House, Jeffries formed a close alliance with Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi and Democratic Whip James Clyburn, and was groomed for his present position, never giving the slightest sign of dissent or independence from the right-wing, pro-corporate, pro-imperialist policies of the party. He has voted for every bill to fund military operations, even when many Democrats were in opposition.

In 2023, Jeffries and Pelosi, along with a majority of Democrats and every Republican, voted for a three-page House resolution, titled, "Denouncing the Horrors of Socialism," which regurgitated a century of lies about socialism promulgated by fascist White Russian émigrés, Hitler and the John Birch Society. That did not stop pseudo-socialists like Ocasio-Cortez from supporting him, first as Minority Leader, now as Speaker.

On November 14, 2023, Jeffries and Schumer joined hands with Republican House Speaker Mike Johnson and Republican Senator Joni Ernst at the "March for Israel" on the National Mall in Washington, which the WSWS denounced as the "March for Genocide." Jeffries declared from the platform: "I strongly support President Biden's supplemental funding request for Israel, for Ukraine and for humanitarian assistance."

The Democratic leadership's chief priority since the election is a major increase in US aid to the NATO war against Russia in Ukraine. Democrats are reported to be preparing a package of about $15 billion. On November 10, Republicans moved to refer the resolution impeaching Secretary of War Pete Hegseth to committee. Jeffries had declared himself a "hard yes," but he made no effort to whip the vote. Eleven Democrats were absent, more than enough to hand the Republicans a 211–204 victory.

Jeffries made an appearance three days later at the "What's Next?" conference in Denver, sponsored by the right-wing Majority Democrats group, which is largely funded by billionaire publisher Michael Bloomberg, billionaire James Murdoch (the "dissident" son of Rupert Murdoch) and billionaire hedge fund bosses Steve and Sue Mandel. That is where he was heckled by a group calling for an arms embargo on Israel and for Medicare for All.

The Democratic Party won the midterms by the largest margin in national voting for the House of Representatives since the Watergate landslide of 1974, after the forced resignation of Republican President Richard Nixon. Democrats will control at least 257 seats, compared to 171 for the Republicans, with seven still remaining to be decided. In the Senate, following the victory of Mary Peltola in Alaska, Democrats have captured nine Republican seats, giving them a 56-44 margin.

But contrary to the claims assiduously spread by the DSA and its pseudo-left allies, the incoming Democratic majority does not reflect the shift to the left among workers and youth. It rather represents an effort to divert and strangle that movement. Among those spearheading that effort are the 23 former military-intelligence operatives who are taking their seats in the House in January, more than doubling what the WSWS has called the "CIA Democrats" faction in Congress.

One of those CIA Democrats, Representative Jake Auchincloss of Massachusetts, is chairman of Majority Democrats, the group which sponsored the Denver conference. In remarks on the second day of the event, Auchincloss emphasized the need to move further to the right. "For too long, our party has given permission to too many bad ideas," he said. "My challenge to everyone running in 2028 … is tell us which ideas you'll stop giving permission to…"

That will be the role of Jeffries, likely Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer and every other leader of the Democratic Party. They will pursue the policies of Wall Street and American imperialism no less aggressively than the Republicans. And they will devote their efforts particularly to shutting down any opposition from below, the "bad ideas" which must be censored and repressed.

The nomination of Jeffries only underscores the most urgent political task facing American workers and youth: breaking with the Democratic Party, as well as its pseudo-left defenders and apologists, and building an independent revolutionary socialist movement, based on uniting the working class internationally to defend jobs, living standards, democratic rights and oppose imperialist war.

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