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USA

# **Democrats Stop the Republicans’ “Red Tsunami”; Trumpists Defeated; Progressives Make Gains**

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**The Democratic Party did better than expected in the U.S. mid-term elections, preventing what Republicans claimed would be a "red Tsunami" (red being the Republican color). "It was a good day for democracy, and I think a good day for America," said President Joe Biden, who also announced that he was planning on running for a second term as president.**

Still, as of November 11, both the Senate and House elections are too close to call. In Georgia, where it appears that neither Senate candidate won a majority, there will be a runoff election on December 6. Nevada and Arizona are too close to call and many House races are still undetermined as counting goes on. It is possible the Democrats will keep their majority in the Senate though the Republicans could take control of the House. The Democratic success seems to have been based on young voters, women, and Blacks, and several progressive candidates did well.

The election was a defeat for former president Donald Trump and his candidates on the extreme rightwing of the Republican Party and weakens his chances in the 2024 presidential election.

The mid-term was the most expensive such election in U.S. history, with both parties spending more than \$16 billion dollars. Billionaires contributed to both parties, with their money making up 20% of all Republican and 14.5% of all Democratic contributions. Democrats tend to receive more small donations than Republicans who outspent Democrats by just \$200 million. As always Democrats had the backing of several major labor unions that mobilized their members to knock on doors, make phone calls, and get out the vote on election day, though many white workers—construction workers, steel workers—vote for Republican candidates.

## **Democrats' Surprising Success**

The Democrats' success in holding back the red tide came as a surprise both to them and to the Republicans. The Republicans ran on the issue of inflation, crime, and controlling immigration, while the Democrats primary issues were women's abortion rights and the preservation of American democracy. And the Democrats' issues appear—to the surprise of almost everyone—to have led to large turnouts by women and younger voters. Democrats can count on something like 80 percent of the Black vote; and while Republicans have made some gains among Latinos, still an estimated 60 percent voted for the Democratic Party.

Within the Democratic camp, progressive candidates did well. Progressive Summer Lee also won in Pennsylvania, as did Greg Casar in Texas, Maxwell Frost in Florida, and, with Senator Bernie Sanders' endorsement, so did Rebecca Balint in Vermont.

John Fetterman, who rejects the progressive label but holds progressive views, ran as the working class candidate and won the U.S. Senate seat in Pennsylvania. Said Fetterman, "For every job that's ever been lost, for every factory that was ever closed, for every person that works hard but never gets ahead, I'm proud of what we ran on." Fetterman, who suffered a stroke during the campaign also said, "Healthcare is a fundamental human right. It saved my life, and it should all be there for you when you ever should need it."

In New York State where the Democrats did poorly, losing congressional seats, socialist Alexandria Ocasio Cortez has called for a root-and-branch reorganization of the state party. "It's no secret that an enormous amount of party leadership in New York State is based on big money and old-school, calcified machine-style politics that creates a

very anemic voting base that is disengaged and disenfranchised," said Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. "We need to rebuild the party apparatus from the bottom up."

Biden's announcement that he is planning to run for president—depending on his health and a conversation with his family—may be a problem for the Democrats. Biden is 79 years old, too old in the eyes of many, and there is no obvious alternative at the moment. And Bernie Sanders, who has lost two presidential races, is now 81.

## **Republican Leadership in Question**

Donald Trump, who in the last several years took control of the Republican Party, had endorsed a range of candidates for the Senate and the House, as well as state races. Many of these, following Trump, denied the results of the 2020 election, claiming that Trump had actually won, and Biden was not the legitimate president. Others were believers in a variety of conspiracy theories—anti-vaxxers and followers of Q-Anon—some were linked to far-right militias, and at least one had been in the Capitol at the time of the January 6, 2021 insurrection. Some were just kooky. Voters found many of these candidates too far out and declined to vote for them. As a result, for the first time in years, several Republican politicians and rightwing media figures have criticized Trump and suggested that he should no longer be party leader. At 76 years of age, some also think he's too old.

At the same time, Trump's rival, Republican Ron DeSantis, who is 44 years old, won a resounding victory in his race for reelection as governor of Florida, receiving almost 60 percent of the vote. DeSantis will challenge and could displace Trump as presidential candidate and leader of the Republicans. DeSantis, who is every bit as conservative as Trump, has carried out repressive and racist immigration policies, opposes abortion, opposes "critical race theory" (a code term for discussions of racism) and became notorious for his "Don't Say Gay" legislation prohibiting teaching younger children about gender and sexual identity.

It is too early to say whether Trump will lose his stranglehold on the Republican Party, but his grip appears to be loosening.

## **The Left at the Margins**

Historically, the American far left argued that the Republicans and Democrats were both virtually the same, both capitalist parties, Tweedledum and Tweedledee, and that working people needed their own party. Some argued it should be a revolutionary party, others that it should be a labor party, and various Communist and Socialist parties ran candidates. In 1996 a group of labor unions founded the Labor Party, though it never ran national candidates. Later many on the left supported the Green Party. There is always the fear, however, that support for a candidate on the left will take votes away from the Democrats and help to elect a Republican.

Since the 2016 presidential campaign of Bernie Sanders in the Democratic Party, supported by the Democratic Socialist of America, and with the threat of Trump's extreme rightwing politics, most leftists have supported the Democrats as a bulwark against Trump and fascism. The result is that socialists run in the Democratic Party or otherwise have virtually no chance of being heard, much less elected. When the Greens or other leftist parties run candidates, they generally get very few votes.

The debate in the left is whether one can build a future socialist party within the Democratic Party or one must run independent socialist candidates as in the past. All agree that until there is a mass movement of the working class

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the creation of a socialist party is not on the agenda. In any case, the collapse of the feared red wave gives us another few years to both build the movement and find the right political course.

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