

US midterm vote: Democrats win control of House of Representatives

By Patrick Martin
7 November 2018

The Democratic Party won control of the House of Representatives in the midterm elections on November 6, gaining more than the 23 seats required for a majority. With many House races too close to call or with large numbers of votes still uncounted, particularly in states like California and Washington, which provide for voting by mail, the five television networks projected a Democratic victory with a gain of 30 seats or more.

The Republican Party retained control of the US Senate, gaining several seats in states where President Trump campaigned heavily against Democratic incumbents. It is noteworthy that Democratic senators who capitulated most cravenly to Trump's vicious persecution of immigrants—Joe Donnelly in Indiana and Claire McCaskill in Missouri—lost their races by wide margins. Republicans also captured Senate seats in North Dakota and Florida, with seats in Montana, Nevada and Arizona undecided as of this writing.

The Democrats made some gains in state governorships, where the Republicans held 26 of the 36 statehouses. Democratic candidates won Republican-held governorships in Illinois, Maine and Michigan, and defeated the most right-wing anti-immigrant Republican, Kris Kobach, in Kansas, usually a Republican state, as well as the two-term governor of Wisconsin, Scott Walker, notorious for his assault on workers' rights. But Republicans won the two most hotly contested races in large states—Ohio and Florida. The Georgia race could end up sufficiently close to go to a run-off. Among the biggest states, the Democrats retained control of New York, Pennsylvania and California, while the Republicans held Texas.

Winning control of the House in no way means a shift to left on the part of the Democratic Party. On the contrary, prominent Democrats have been at pains to

declare their desire for bipartisan collaboration with the Trump administration and the Republican-controlled Senate.

A victory celebration saw the geriatric leadership of the House Democrats take their bows, with some difficulty, before the television cameras: 78-year-old Nancy Pelosi, the House minority leader, likely to become the next speaker of the House; 79-year-old Steny Hoyer, the House minority whip, in line to become the next majority leader; and 78-year-old James Clyburn, the deputy minority whip, in line to become the next majority whip.

Pelosi made a series of vague promises, beginning with “restoring the Constitution's checks and balances to the Trump administration,” and “stopping the assault on Medicare, Medicaid, the Affordable Care Act” and on people with pre-existing medical conditions. She listed a series of issues on which back-channel discussions have already begun with the Trump White House, including prescription drug prices and infrastructure.

She concluded her remarks with a paean to bipartisan cooperation, declaring, “We've all had enough of division,” and claiming that “unity for our country” would be the main goal of the new Democratic-controlled House.

She said not a word about the racist campaign against immigrants and refugees that was Trump's focus in the closing days of the election campaign, or the nationalistic and militaristic character of the Trump administration's foreign policy. On the latter point, she pledged the Democrats to “honoring the men and women of our military who guarantee our freedom.”

Trump reportedly called Pelosi shortly after her victory statement to congratulate her and discuss future relations between the White House and the

Democratic-controlled House.

There are two additional factors, besides the public assurances of the leadership, that underlie the further shift to the right by the Democratic Party. The vast majority of the Republican-held seats captured by the Democrats were in suburban districts with higher incomes and higher education levels than the average. Only a handful were seats in predominantly working class or low-income areas.

Equally significant is the background of many of the Democratic candidates who won Republican seats. A large number are drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus. The *World Socialist Web Site* has described them as “CIA Democrats.”

Winning seats (as of this writing) were at least nine such candidates, including two former CIA operatives, Abigail Spanberger in Virginia and Elissa Slotkin in Michigan; former military officers Max Rose in New York, Mikie Sherill in New Jersey, Chrissy Houlahan and Connor Lamb in Pennsylvania, Elaine Luria in Virginia, and Jason Crow in Colorado; and former State Department official Tom Malinowski in New Jersey, with several other races still to be decided.

These candidates will bring into the Democratic caucus in the House of Representatives the direct influence of the military-intelligence apparatus, ensuring that one of the main areas of activity in the next Congress will be Democratic Party pressure for an even more aggressive foreign policy towards Russia, Syria, Iran and other targets of American imperialism.

The election results set the stage for a further shift to the right in the whole structure of official politics, regardless of the broader shift to the left among working people and young people.

The Democratic Party ran on a right-wing, pro-capitalist program, offering no significant improvements in jobs, living standards and social benefits for the working class, and it began seeking an accommodation with Trump even before its victory in the House of Representatives was projected.

The Republican Party will move even further to the right, bound even more tightly to Trump, who seeks to lay the basis for a personalist, authoritarian movement of a fascist character. His domination of the party will only increase.

There is massive popular opposition to the right-wing policies of the Trump administration, particularly its

attacks on democratic rights and its racist vilification of immigrants and refugees. But within the framework of two equally right-wing, corporate-controlled parties, and with the Democratic Party demanding a more aggressive foreign policy and massive internet censorship, this opposition could find only extremely limited expression in the heavier election turnout, particularly among young people and, in some states, among minority voters.

Perhaps the only unalloyed expression of these popular sentiments came in the Florida referendum on a state constitutional amendment to abolish Florida’s policy of imposing lifetime disenfranchisement on anyone with a felony conviction, which deprives 1.4 million Florida residents of the right to vote, nearly half of them African-American. This constitutional amendment passed by a margin of 64 percent to 36 percent, clearing the 60 percent mark required for passage.

To contact the WSWWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

<http://www.wsws.org>