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By Editor Workers World

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The two-party farce

Nov. 10 — As of this writing, two days after the polls closed on Election Day 2022, the makeup of the Senate and House of Representatives is still undetermined. The Republicans are likely to gain a slim majority in the House, but the predicted “red wave” has not materialized. Control of the Senate will not be known for at least a few more days and possibly not until after a Dec. 6 runoff in Georgia.



Self-congratulatory Democrats and liberal-leaning media are embellishing this nonevent. At a press conference Nov. 9, President Joe Biden called Election Day “a good day for democracy.”

Endorsement by the 45th U.S. president seems to have hurt more Republican candidates than it helped, with a majority of them losing, but a Trump spokesperson insisted “it was a big night for President [Donald] Trump’s candidates.” (foxnews, Nov. 9)

Trump is expected to announce his entry to the 2024 presidential race Nov. 15. Some Republican strategists, recognizing Trump as a liability, are considering Florida Governor

Ron DeSantis as the preferred white-supremacist, transphobic, homophobic, climate-denying and COVID-19-spreading fascist to run for the country's highest office.

Even without the boost that a “tsunami” or “bloodbath” would give, the fascist wing of the political right was able to use the midterm elections to build its base. The races they lost were very close; 2020 election deniers remain a majority of House Republicans. It would be a catastrophic mistake to underestimate this danger.

Referendums a bright spot

Progressive voters made their voice heard through referendums on a range of issues. In all five states where abortion access was on the ballot — with pro-reproductive justice proposals winning in Michigan, Vermont and California and anti-choice proposals defeated in Kentucky and Montana — the right wing was pushed back.

Successful pro-worker initiatives that passed included raising the state minimum wage in Nebraska, ending the lower minimum wage for tipped workers in Washington, D.C., enshrining collective bargaining rights in Illinois and providing free school lunches in Colorado while raising pay for school cafeteria workers.

Tennessee, Vermont, Oregon and Alabama — the latter having had several prisoner work strikes — voted to ban involuntary prison work, a form of enslavement.

Other measures approved expanded voter rights and decriminalized marijuana possession.

None of these progressive initiatives would have made it on the ballot without the hard work of grassroots activists. Most states require an extremely high number of voter signatures on a petition; many signatures are disqualified over technicalities. An army of volunteer petitioners is needed to bring a proposal to the voters.

These hard-fought referendum votes, in contrast to the two-party farce, are more representative of the democratic will of the masses.

No progress without struggle

However things shake out in Congress, these elections will have little impact on the everyday lives of working-class and oppressed people. The capitalist ruling class remains

in power, as it has after every previous contest between the two capitalist political parties. Neither the Democrats nor the Republicans pose a threat to that power.

Capitalism, the system based on exploitation of labor by capitalists, has saddled workers with the highest inflation in decades. Even as inflation slows, higher interest rates will add to the cost of housing, cars and more. Companies like Amazon and Starbucks are engaged in widespread union busting to deny workers a voice on wages and working conditions.

Now tech companies are laying off large numbers of workers. This is another sign that, as Workers World Party First Secretary Larry Holmes wrote in Workers World Oct. 17: “As the magnitude of capitalist overproduction grows exponentially with the vast changes to the productive forces of the economy, each subsequent capitalist crisis becomes wider, worse, more global and more difficult to control. The new technology of the digital age has made the crisis of capitalist overproduction a permanent feature of capitalism.” (workers.org/2022/10/67199/)

Elections won't change this.

As the great anti-enslavement leader Frederick Douglass put it, “If there is no struggle, there is no progress.”

The movement must channel the same grassroots energy that succeeded in defending reproductive justice at the polls. Class struggle — in the neighborhood, the workplace and the streets — can push back the fascist threat and win real changes that for politicians are just phony election promises.