

Trump and Democratic Party establishment retain grip in primary contests

Patrick Martin
16 July 2020

Primary elections held July 7 in New Jersey and July 14 in Alabama, Maine and Texas have confirmed the general pattern of the 2020 campaign between the two right-wing capitalist parties that exercise an effective political monopoly in the United States.

On the Republican side, President Donald Trump continues to hold sway, pushing through his favored candidates for the US Senate race in Alabama and for a Texas congressional seat. On the Democratic side, the party establishment prevailed in the most important contests, including the selection of the party's nominee for US Senate in Texas.

Under conditions of major social and political convulsions in America, with an unprecedented death toll from the coronavirus pandemic and mass protests against police violence and racism involving millions of people, the two-party system is virtually unaffected, thereby demonstrating its sclerotic character.

The only Republican primary contest for a US Senate seat came in Alabama, where former Senator Jeff Sessions lost a runoff vote for the party nomination to Tommy Tuberville, former football head coach at Auburn University, by a 62-38 percent margin.

Trump endorsed Tuberville and campaigned for him heavily on Twitter, constantly vilifying and demeaning Sessions, the first US senator to endorse his 2016 presidential campaign. Trump named Sessions as US attorney general when he took office in January, 2017.

Sessions recused himself from the Justice Department investigation into claims that the Trump campaign had colluded with the Russian government during the 2016 elections, as he was required to do by law, since he had been one of the most prominent spokesmen for the campaign. But Trump never forgave him for failing to shut down the probe and allowing his deputy, Rod Rosenstein, to select Robert Mueller as a special

counsel to conduct it.

The Alabama primary campaign has to rank as one of the most degrading and reactionary spectacles in recent American politics. Sessions campaigned as a diehard political supporter of Trump, refusing to criticize him in any way and staking out far more explicitly right-wing positions than Tuberville, who did little more than pledge undying personal loyalty to the president.

Tuberville has never held political office and had not been politically active until this year, but he had Trump's support because he was not Sessions. He will now be the favorite to defeat Democratic Senator Doug Jones, who won the seat in a special election in 2017 after his Republican opponent, former judge Roy Moore, was publicly accused of sexual improprieties.

Another candidate closely tied to Trump—but with Trump's public support rather than antipathy—won a Republican runoff election in the 13th Congressional District of Texas, which covers the state's northern panhandle and its border with Oklahoma, including the cities of Amarillo and Wichita Falls.

Retired Admiral Ronny Jackson, the former White House physician who repeatedly declared Trump to be in amazing good health, finished second in the first round of the primary, held March 3, to agribusiness lobbyist Josh Winegarner, who had the support of retiring Representative Mac Thornberry, who has held the seat for 26 years. But in the runoff, delayed for months by the coronavirus crisis, with Trump's endorsement and the backing of far-right groups such as the House Freedom Fund and the Club for Growth, Jackson won 56 percent of the vote.

The results of primary voting for Democratic Party candidates confirmed the lockstep control of the party establishment over the selection of nominees for the US Senate. After the presidency, these are the most

important contests in 2020, with the Republican Party seeking to defend its 53-47 edge. Thirty-four seats are at stake this year, 23 of them now held by Republicans.

In the course of the primaries, there have been six contests for Democratic Senate nominations between candidates backed by the party establishment and candidates touted as “insurgents” or openly supported by the Bernie Sanders-Elizabeth Warren faction of the party.

In every contest, the more openly right-wing establishment candidate has had an overwhelming financial advantage and has prevailed. These include John Hickenlooper in Colorado, Theresa Greenfield in Iowa, Amy McGrath in Kentucky and Cal Cunningham in North Carolina. On Tuesday, the speaker of Maine’s House of Representatives, Sara Gideon, defeated Sanders activist Betsy Smart, and in Texas, MJ Hegar defeated longtime state senator Royce West.

Hegar’s victory in Texas was particularly revealing of the right-wing character of the Democratic Party, with the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee (DSCC), Emily’s List and other financial backers throwing their support to the former Republican war veteran.

After voting in the Republican presidential primary in 2016 for businesswoman Carly Fiorina over Donald Trump, Hegar won the Democratic nomination for an Austin-area congressional seat in 2018, where she was narrowly defeated by Republican Representative John Carter.

Hegar raised an enormous war chest for her race against Carter, in large measure by capitalizing on her record as an Air Force rescue helicopter pilot in Afghanistan, who survived being shot down by the Taliban. She later came to prominence in a lawsuit to win the right of female pilots to fly in combat, followed by a memoir, *Shoot Like a Girl: One Woman’s Dramatic Fight in Afghanistan and on the Home Front*, which was optioned as a biographical film.

In 2020, Hegar has already raised more than \$6 million, which she used to overwhelm West in the final weeks before the runoff. Over that period, according to the *Texas Tribune*, Hegar and her supporting groups, including the DSCC, outspent West 85-1 in ads targeting the Houston area.

In 2018, the *World Socialist Web Site* profiled Hegar as one of dozens of Democratic congressional

candidates drawn from the military-intelligence apparatus in an effort to insure that any popular shift toward the Democratic Party, in response to widespread hatred of Trump, would lead to the election of safe, pro-imperialist representatives.

These CIA Democrats, as we described them, also included Amy McGrath in Kentucky, who, like Hegar, narrowly lost a congressional race in 2018 and was then promoted to become a Democratic candidate for US Senate.

Another CIA Democrat, former Army intelligence officer Gina Ortiz Jones, is now favored in the election for the 23rd Congressional District of Texas, which stretches along the Texas-Mexico border from El Paso to Laredo. Jones was narrowly defeated two years ago by incumbent Republican Will Hurd—himself a former CIA agent—but Hurd’s decision to retire leaves Jones the frontrunner.

Jones could well be joined in the Texas delegation by a former State Department official Preston Sri Kulkarni, who narrowly lost a race for the 22nd Congressional District in 2018 and is running a well-financed campaign as the Democratic nominee in 2020. The Republican incumbent, Representative Pete Olson, is retiring at age 57 rather than face a rematch in a Houston suburban district with a large South Asian immigrant population, under political conditions viewed as increasingly unfavorable to the Republican Party.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact