

Republicans win control of Senate in US congressional elections

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The Republican Party won control of the US Senate in Tuesday's midterm elections, taking more than the six Democratic-held seats needed to obtain the 51 required for a majority. Republican candidates defeated incumbent Democratic senators in North Carolina, Arkansas and Iowa and won open Democratic seats in West Virginia, Iowa, South Dakota and Montana.

A Democratic seat in Alaska was in jeopardy as vote-counting continued late into the night, and in Louisiana, another Democratic-held seat, the Republican candidate led and is heavily favored in a runoff to be held December 6. The Republicans did not lose a single seat.

The Republicans also expanded their majority in the House of Representatives, with a net gain of at least eight seats, putting them in full control of both houses of Congress for the first time since 2006, and for the first time in the presidency of Barack Obama.

Elections for state governorships produced more mixed results, with Democrats retaining California and New York among the four largest states and Republicans retaining Texas and winning narrowly in Florida. The Democratic governor of Illinois and the Republican governor of Pennsylvania were both defeated for reelection.

Republican Scott Walker of Wisconsin, notorious for his attacks on public employees in the state, easily won reelection over a multi-millionaire Democrat who tacitly backed his anti-worker legislation. Michigan Governor Rick Snyder, who pushed through a right-to-work law and oversaw the bankruptcy of Detroit, also won reelection.

The outcome of the vote is a debacle for the Democratic Party and the Obama administration, which threw in the towel in terms of the House of Representatives months ago and concentrated their efforts on holding onto a handful of Senate seats needed to maintain a narrow majority in the upper house. This effort produced dismal results, with only one of the threatened Democratic seats, in New Hampshire, successfully defended.

The Republican victory does not represent a shift by the American population to the right, but demonstrates the bankrupt and reactionary character of the Democratic Party and the mass disillusionment with the Obama administration. In the absence of any progressive alternative to the two right-wing, corporate-controlled parties, the majority of potential voters stayed home. Voter turnout hit another record low, with only 38 percent going to the polls.

The working class had no representation in the 2014 elections in either party. The

Democrats, like the Republicans, are controlled by the financial aristocracy that rules America. Corporate bosses and billionaires dictate the policy and personnel of both parties, and they are now demanding a further shift to the right in official Washington.

Obama and the Democrats are more than happy to oblige. Before the polls had closed on the West Coast, Obama had already sent out an invitation to a bipartisan group of legislators, including the congressional leaders of both parties in the House and Senate, to meet in the White House Friday to begin discussions on future collaboration.

In an interview on CNN Monday, Vice President Joseph Biden said the White House was willing to compromise with Republicans and had begun working on areas where joint action might be possible. He said the Republicans had to make a decision: "Are they going to begin to allow things to happen? Or are they going to continue to be obstructionists? And I think they're going to choose to get things done."

That agenda will undoubtedly include major tax cuts for corporations, further cuts in spending on federally funded social programs like food stamps, intensified repression of immigrants, and the continued buildup of the military/intelligence apparatus in the United States along with expanded military aggression overseas.

These policies are deeply unpopular with American working people and youth. They are increasingly turning away from both capitalist parties and their sham electoral contests, which employ mudslinging and lies to disguise the two parties' fundamental agreement on doing the bidding of big business.

The election took place amid widespread public hostility to both corporate-controlled parties, with dismal poll numbers for President Obama and the congressional leadership on both sides of the aisle. The \$4 billion expended to promote one party and vilify the other served only to further alienate the population from the entire political structure.

In nearly all the closely contested Senate contests, both the Republican and Democratic candidates were regarded unfavorably by a majority of voters. The same was true in most of the closely contested races for state governor.

Voter turnout rose in a handful of the most closely contested states, but fell below previous record lows in many states. Voter participation by young people fell particularly sharply. Barely one-third of eligible voters went to the polls in California, the most populous state.

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