

# #1494 Progressives and the Primaries

Intro 6-8-22

[00:00:00] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Welcome to this episode of the award-winning *Best of the Left Podcast*, in which we will take a look at progressive victories in primary elections around the country, and explain why moderates are not much more than allies of conservatism. Clips today are from *Democracy Now!*, *The Bradcast*, *The Takeaway*, *The Brian Lehrer Show*, *Second Thought*, and *The Majority Report*, with an additional members-only clip from *Democracy Now!*.

## David Sirota: Progressives Win Key Primary Races Despite Millions Spent to Back Corporate Democrats - Democracy Now! - Air Date 5-18-22

[00:00:26] **AMY GOODMAN:** Voters went to the polls in Tuesday's primary elections in Pennsylvania, Kentucky, Oregon, North Carolina and Idaho. In Pennsylvania, state Senator Doug Mastriano won the Republican gubernatorial primary. Mastriano is a far-right politician who backed the overturning of the 2020 presidential election and funded charter buses to take supporters to Washington on January 6th ahead of the insurrection.

Meanwhile, Pennsylvania's closely-watched Republican Senate primary is too close to call. Television doctor Mehmet Oz, who is backed by Donald Trump, has a narrow lead over hedge fund executive Dave McCormick, though he is expected to make up a lot of the difference with mail-in votes. The winner will face Democrat John Fetterman, who defeated Congressman Conor Lamb even though Lamb was endorsed by much of Pennsylvania's Democratic establishment. Fetterman, who's Pennsylvania's current lieutenant governor, had to miss his victory party Tuesday night. He suffered a stroke on Friday and spent Primary Day in a hospital, where he had a pacemaker implanted.

In other races, the progressive candidate Summer Lee has declared victory over Steve Irwin in a closely-watched congressional race in Pennsylvania, but the race hasn't been called yet. Irwin received major funding from AIPAC, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, and the Democratic Majority for Israel. She addressed supporters last night.

[00:01:55] **REP. SUMMER LEE:** We showed them throughout this race that when we build coalitions, that when we cross all over the county, when we cross and build a multiracial, multigenerational movement of people of all religions and all genders and all races, all ages, that when we come together, we can't be stopped!

[00:02:12] **AMY GOODMAN:** In North Carolina, the Trump-backed Republican Congressman Madison Cawthorn lost the primary Tuesday. The 26-year-old was seen as a rising star in the Republican Party, but his campaign faltered after a slew of scandals, including allegations of insider trading. Also in North Carolina, Trump-endorsed Ted Budd beat incumbent and former Governor Pat McCrory.

Meanwhile, in Idaho, Trump-endorsed Lieutenant Governor Janice McGeachin lost her primary to incumbent Governor Brad Little.

And in Kentucky, Charles Booker has won the Democratic primary for U.S. Senate, becoming the first Black candidate in Kentucky to win a major party nomination for the U.S. Senate. He'll face Republican Senator Rand Paul in November.

For more, we're joined by two guests. We'll begin with David Sirota, investigative journalist, founder of the news website The Lever, editor-at-large for Jacobin and former adviser to Senator Bernie Sanders during his presidential campaign. In a few minutes, we'll turn also to Nina Turner, who earlier this month lost her Ohio congressional primary after facing massive spending and attacks by super PACs.

David, let's begin with you. You have a piece headlined "They Are Not Even Pretending Anymore: Democratic leaders are joining with oligarchs to try to permanently destroy the progressive movement." But why don't we go through the states and the primaries that you feel are most significant right now?

[00:03:36] **DAVID SIROTA:** Sure. I mean, I think — look, I think the leadership and the super PACs that you mentioned really did make an effort to rig these primaries, many of which you've reviewed the results on, to rig them in a way to preference corporate candidates. There was a lot, millions of dollars, that flooded into the key races in Oregon and Pennsylvania and North Carolina to try to preference the conservative candidates over the progressive candidates in those races.

And there's some good news this morning, as you mentioned, which is that many of the progressive candidates seemed to — at least right now -- seemed to have overcome that effort to defeat them. Summer Lee, a great example, huge amount of money spent by AIPAC and the DMFI super PAC to try to preference Steve Irwin, a guy who had been a corporate lawyer running union avoidance at a corporate law firm, trying to preference him over state Representative Summer Lee. It looks like, if the results hold, that she will win that race.

In Oregon, two congressional races out there, Kurt Schrader, the incumbent Democrat, he had cast a key vote to kill President Biden and Democrats' drug pricing legislation. He was very tight with the pharmaceutical industry. A pharmaceutical front group put a lot of money into that race to try to preference him in that race. President Joe Biden endorsed Schrader despite Schrader playing that pivotal role trying to stop Biden's own purported agenda. It looks like his opponent is going to defeat him in that race. Also in Oregon, a crypto billionaire, one of Joe Biden's biggest donors, put a ton of money into a separate race for a relatively unknown candidate, and a state representative, Andrea Salinas, ended up winning that race.

So I think that one of the takeaways — and then you add in, of course, the Fetterman race, where he won that primary in Pennsylvania for Senate. Taken together, I think what you've seen is a surprising backlash, at the voter level, to all of the money that flooded in. And it's been a pretty good night for progressive candidates, despite all that money.

## **Howie Klein of 'Down With Tyranny' on midterm primaries - The Bradcast - Air Date 5-27-22**

[00:05:54] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** Big news: a grassroots supported Democrat, Jamie McLeod-Skinner, uh, has been called now as the winner over conservative Democratic incumbent representative, Kurt Schrader. We've been talking about that race on this show, uh, because they had a huge, um, mess up with flawed ballots that the Clackamas County Clerk failed to notice before she sent them out. And then instead of counting the ballots by hand, she had to remake tens of thousands of them, one by one, which is insane. But now AP is in fact calling it for Jamie McLeod-Skinner over a sitting, conservative Democrat, Kurt Schrader.

[00:06:39] **HOWIE KLEIN:** Right, a blue dog Democrat. He was the last Democrat left in the House who voted against raising the minimum wage. All the others who had voted against raising the minimum wage had already been defeated. So he was the last one left standing. He also voted to destroy the Democrats plans to lower the cost of drugs. He's a Big Pharma guy, they and other bad players put lots of money into his campaign. He outspent her by huge margin and he still wound up being defeated. Really, really great news. She's wonderful. She's terrible. It was something that you just mentioned. Oh yes, about the Clackamas County Clerk. This is right up your alley. But I got a letter from a friend of mine today who was just elected to the state legislature from that area saying that there they are campaigning, uh, also to defeat her in November so that she will not be the Clackamas County Clerk anymore.

[00:07:33] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** Yep, Sherry Hall is her name. And she was elected in sort of a Tea Party wave 10 years ago, has had disaster after disaster there ever since.

[00:07:43] **HOWIE KLEIN:** She's considered to be really extremely incompetent above and beyond her leanings politically.

[00:07:51] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** This mess, uh, that they've been dealing with, uh, since, for the past two weeks, trying to get this cleaned up, uh, we had an election integrity activist on the show on a previous Bradcast who called this the Hiroshima of botched elections. So maybe she's on her way out. Next door, by the way, Oregon 6, uh, is a new district. I think it was won by a progressive State Rep. Andrea Salinas. Maybe most notable because she defeated a total newcomer, I think named Carrick Flynn who had...

[00:08:21] **HOWIE KLEIN:** Not even a newcomer. Not even that, just a random guy. He wasn't, he's not part of civic life in Oregon. He's just some random guy, who Sam Bankman-Fried decided he wanted him in Congress and was willing to put \$15 million of his own money into it. This is a case of like what I was describing before, where the media says 11 million or 12 million, because they don't look to see the latest FEC reports that come in every day. And as of now Bankman-Fried to put \$15 million into electing this guy. The most that was ever spent by somebody to elect somebody to Congress, a single person to one congressional seat.

[00:09:02] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** To what end? Why?

[00:09:04] **HOWIE KLEIN:** No one knows why. And Bankman-Fried, by the way, happens to be Biden's second biggest donor. I think he's the biggest donor for the DCCC and he gave the DCCC another million dollars and said, "Spend it there."

[00:09:19] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** And this guy, he's a crypto billionaire, apparently.

[00:09:22] **HOWIE KLEIN:** Who lives in the Bahamas.

[00:09:24] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** He may not have quite as much money anymore since, uh, crypto has crashed in recent weeks.

[00:09:28] **HOWIE KLEIN:** So now he's got 4 million instead of 8 million. I'm sorry, billion. I forgot. Million/billion. I can't wait till they start talking about trillion.

[00:09:36] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** Yeah, they will. But yeah, very strange, that. I can only assume the reason they wanted to back this Carrick Flynn guy was because the same guy that Sam Bankman-Fried was willing to give a whole bunch of money to the rest of the party, to, to Biden to the Democrats, et cetera. So in the meantime it didn't work. That's the good news. Uh, Andrea Salinas, uh, she she's good? We should be happy about this?

[00:10:02] **HOWIE KLEIN:** Yeah, she's good. Enough. She's not, uh, anything like Summer Lee. I mean, they're not in the same ballpark. She's good.

[00:10:09] **BRAD FRIEDMAN - HOST, THE BRADCAST:** All right. Before moving to North Carolina, anything else in Oregon?

[00:10:13] **HOWIE KLEIN:** It was one other seat in Oregon, which was, uh, unfortunately didn't go that well. That's the 4th District, which was open and the progressive candidate was Doyle Canning and she lost out to just a run-of-the-mill, garden variety establishment Democrat, who will now go to Congress, most likely, although it's a kind of, I mean, the district was formally a swing district and the redistricting made it much safer for Democrats who are like, likely, even though she's a horrible candidate, she's likely to win.

# Voting, Primaries and Redistricting in the South Part 1 - The Takeaway - Air Date 5-28-22

[00:10:48] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** Let's, in fact, then Maya pivot over to Stacy Abrams. She ran unopposed for the Democratic nomination for Governor, which is very different than the last time out where she had to overcome a pretty intense primary challenge. What are you looking for in this rematch in November?

[00:11:09] **MAYA KING:** Well, a couple of things. A lot has changed from 2018, but what's interesting is that the Abrams' campaign has maintained a very similar campaign playbook in that they are going to continue their outreach to rural voters, voters that might not have been supportive of the campaign in 2018 or voters that might not have been really engaged with before.

They're also aiming now to make this campaign a referendum on Governor Brian Kemp. What we have heard a lot already from Stacey Abrams is this idea that Kemp is a "failed governor" on issues, particularly as they pertain to Black Georgians, low-income Georgians, and rural Georgians. Really something I'm looking for now is how that would play with the electorate, particularly against the backdrop of some pretty significant headwinds for Democrats.

We've rehashed this so many times now in politics, but it just can't be said enough just how difficult the environment is for national Democrats right now. Obviously, prices are rising. We've got a baby formula shortage that has just, I think, worried a lot of people and really affected some critical voting groups, but Democrats are looking to the leaked Roe v. Wade draft opinion as a possible lifeline, particularly here in Georgia as a way to appeal, especially to White women who may not have supported Abrams in 2018, but feel nervous or might have some misgivings about Republican leadership now in the wake of that draft opinion.

I think they're also looking for possible improvements in the economy later this summer, if that's at all possible, just aiming to capitalize on literally anything that they can to try to close the gap, I think, between Abrams and Kemp in this rematch that, again, is just taking place. A lot has happened over the last four years, and so taking place under some very different circumstances than that of 2018.



[00:13:17] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** Maya, can you back up and zoom in for just a moment on the baby formula shortage? Why is that an issue that's relevant in a Georgia gubernatorial campaign cycle that we're going into?

[00:13:32] **MAYA KING:** It's relevant, I think, everywhere, but in Georgia, voters have been keenly aware now of the role that their governor can play in their everyday lives. That's a message that Mr. Kemp has pushed quite a bit as well. They're looking at the baby formula shortage, one, as just a very scary thing. I mean, the shortage is nationwide, so there are many moms who are just unable to feed their children. That's not a good thing, and I think they see that, many voters see that as yet another Washington policy failure that also connects to ongoing supply chain woes. The fact that, in addition to baby formula, many other things are just more expensive or harder to get. Airline travel and even travel by car, gas prices are extremely high. I think all of these things are intertwined, but the baby formula shortage, the fact that people are unable to, or having just great difficulty feeding their infants adds another layer of urgency and just general anxiety to this political environment.

That just reflects poorly again on President Biden, I think, in the minds of voters. Republicans are very eager to continue to play up any number of messages on failed Democratic leadership in Washington. I think Georgia voters are very keenly aware of how different the state is from Washington. I think both Democrats and Republicans pride themselves on that and are looking, again, at Washington and saying, "Well, what's going on up there?"

Kemp has been pushing a message of the influence and importance of your state executive. I think Abrams is also trying to do the same thing, but in making this a referendum on Kemp is harder to separate that from Washington.

[00:15:30] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** Got it. That's super helpful. Now, Stephen, as Maya was talking about the things that have changed since 2018, one of the most important has been the maps, right? These are primary elections that took place within these new redistricted legislative maps. Can you talk about how this may have affected some of the primary results? I guess I'm thinking here, particularly about Democrat Lucy McBath and Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene.

[00:15:58] **STEPHEN FOWLER:** Georgia has changed a lot over the last decade demographically and politically. It's grown more Democratic, its congressional maps has not. Republicans in charge of the mapmaking this year changed Atlanta's northern suburbs and made the 6th Congressional District a safe Republican seat that was held by Democrat Lucy McBath. The 7th

Congressional District is now a safe Democrat seat that's held by Carolyn Bourdeaux. McBath and Bourdeaux faced off in a member-on-member primary that saw McBath pretty handily win that election because of a lot of different reasons, mainly dealing with the electorate and Bourdeaux's perception as being more moderate and stifling Joe Biden's agenda and things like that, but it has forced Georgia's congressional delegation to have one less Democratic member.

Then on the other side, Representative Marjorie Taylor Greene still represents one of the most conservative districts in the country, even though they added in a sliver of Democratic voters in suburban Cobb County, it's still overwhelmingly Republican, it's still overwhelmingly favorable to Marjorie Taylor Greene. She also decisively won her primary election, in part, because, like other incumbents that we mentioned, she's a known entity. There's no reason that voters were given to vote against her. Voters in her district like a lot of her antics and a lot of her stances on things, and so it's become a point where almost all of Georgia's congressional seats in the future will be decided in primaries and not in the general election.

[00:17:41] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** Say that one more time because that feels absolutely critical to me, and I don't want folks to miss it.

[00:17:48] **STEPHEN FOWLER:** Georgia's 14 congressional house districts are almost to a point where they will be decided in summer primaries instead of the general election because of how uncompetitive the seats have been drawn by legislators in the redistricting process.

[00:18:06] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** Of course, that's stunning, Stephen. In part because we know that primaries just across the board, much less in a midterm election year, have much smaller turnouts.

[00:18:20] **STEPHEN FOWLER:** Right. The governor's race had a million people statewide vote in the Republican primary, but Marjorie Taylor Greene, for example, got about 70,000 votes in her race in her district, and that was enough to blow the doors off her opponents, and so what you see is more and more extreme lawmakers on both sides of the aisle. You see more extreme stances have to be taken to really appeal to enough people that could fill Atlanta's football stadium are the ones deciding who gets sent to Congress in these districts, and it is definitely not doing anything to help our country's polarized nature right now.



# Monday Morning Politics: Midterm Concerns and Foreign Policy - The Brian Lehrer Show - Air Date 5-24-22

[00:19:01] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** A YouGov poll came out with some very interesting findings for here in the middle of primary season.

For example. If you didn't already think Democrats and Republicans have different priorities, the top three things Democrats want their nominees to focus on are inflation, taxing the wealthy, and racial justice. The top three things Republicans want their nominees to focus on are inflation, that one's the same, stopping illegal immigration, and talking about traditional values.

So again, the one thing they agree on there, inflation, is concern number one, and interestingly, the parties are basically tied when it comes to who would be more effective at dealing with inflation, right about 50/50 on which party would be better at that. And that goes against an assumption that inflation concerns give Republicans and electoral advantage that we seem to hear a lot in the media.

The CBS news YouGov poll also finds that there seems to be more passion about abortion policy among Democrats than Republicans right now. 83% of Democrats said they want their nominees to focus on defending abortion rights. Just 59% of Republicans said they want their nominees to focus on opposing abortion rights.

And there's this: with this poll conducted just after the White nationalist mass killing in Buffalo, people were asked how important it is for political leaders to condemn White nationalism. 75% of Democrats said very important. Only 23% of Republicans said it's very important for political leaders to condemn White nationalism.

On CBS Face the Nation yesterday, Republican Senator Rick Scott of Florida, head of the was asked about that and whether he thinks it's important for Republican Senate candidates to condemn White supremacy. The question was about White supremacy. Scott winds up condemning government forms designed to help reach more equality.

[00:21:01] **RICK SCOTT:** Well, clearly we ought to all condemn any hatred. We ought to condemn any White supremacy. We, we've got to figure out how to come together. I believe we got to stop all this racial politics, uh, and the plan I put out, RescueAmerica.com, I said, we ought to stop asking people, uh, on government forms for their skin color.

[00:21:21] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** A pivot from a response to the White nationalist massacre in Buffalo to the White grievance talking point of condemning government forms intended to promote equality in less than 20 seconds. With me now, USA Today Washington Bureau Chief Susan Page. She is also author of the book, *Madam Speaker: Nancy Pelosi and the Lessons of Power*, which is just out in paperback.

Also her previous book, *The Matriarch: Barbara Bush and the Making of an American Dynasty*. And she's now working on one about TV journalist, Barbara Walters. Hi, Susan. Thanks for coming on. Welcome back to WNYC.

[00:21:58] **SUSAN PAGE:** Hey, Brian. It's great to be back with you.

[00:22:01] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** So much to talk about today on domestic politics and foreign affairs alike. Let me start with the finding from the CBS YouGov poll showing the vast discrepancy between the parties on how important it is for political leaders to condemn White supremacy. As I said, three quarters of Democrats, only one quarter of Republicans, saying it's very important. And maybe we heard that reflected in how Rick Scott couldn't answer the question with a simple 'yes'. Do you think Buffalo and its context could matter to the outcome of who controls Congress this year?

[00:22:35] **SUSAN PAGE:** Well, I think probably not. I think, on this issue, minds are pretty well made up. At this point in May of an election year. You're looking for issues that might really change things, shake things up. Uh, and despite the gravity of what happened in Buffalo, I think it is unlikely to change the train that we see coming down the track for November.

[00:23:04] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** And what do you make of the findings that 23% of Republicans think it's very important to condemn White supremacy, only 23% said very important compared to 75% of Democrats.

[00:23:21] **SUSAN PAGE:** And look at the other side of that question, half of Republicans say it is not very or not at all important for political leaders to

condemn White nationalism. That means Republican candidates are in a very safe place with their base voters if they do what you just heard, Senator Scott do, which is take a question about White nationalism and make it an attack on efforts to address racial disparities. That tells you, that poll finding tells you why Republicans are able to do that without penalty, at least within their own party.

[00:23:56] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** And what about abortion rights? You wrote an article in USA Today, not long ago, about abortion rights as a midterm elections issue and how much it might or might not matter after the pending Supreme Court decision, following the Alito draft. Were you taking a wait and see approach on that, I think?

[00:24:13] **SUSAN PAGE:** I was. I mean the leak of the draft Supreme Court decision was really a seismic, uh, political event, but Democrats who hope it transforms the election, the midterm election, I think we're increasingly seeing that that's not happening. I mean, you mentioned the issues that Democrats care most about from this CBS News poll and, you know, abortion, defending abortion rights ranks fourth. Um, so that tells you this is not an issue that is able to overwhelm people's concerns on other fronts, on things such as inflation, even though on this issue, Democrats are very much aligned with where public opinion is, in this poll and others. By almost 2-to-1, Americans say they do not want to see the *Roe v. Wade* decision overturned. And that is what we expect to happen, perhaps as soon as the end of next month.

[00:25:03] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** And we will see, of course, if it winds up increasing Democratic turnout, because even at number four on the list, that's still an important issue. And might motivate some people who would not otherwise have voted depending on this, um, Supreme Court decision in its final form, to actually show up in November. That remains to be seen. Democrats... go ahead, Susan.

[00:25:28] **SUSAN PAGE:** If I could just interrupt for a moment. Pardon me for interrupting. There's another way in which abortion may become more powerful as we get toward November. And that's because it, whenever the Supreme Court decision comes down, if it overturns *Roe v. Wade* as the draft decision did, there are more than a dozen states that have enacted trigger laws that will immediately restrict abortion in some very serious ways. Uh, and we have other states, nine states, I think, that have laws that existed before *Roe v. Wade* was handed down in 1973, that could go immediately back into effect. So it may not be one of those issues where you have to wait down the road to see the impact. We'll see the impact on abortion, access to abortion across the

country instantly. And that's something that might make this issue more powerful again.

[00:26:16] **BRIAN LEHRER - HOST, THE BRIAN LEHRER SHOW:** And I saw that the Republican governor of Arkansas was on one of the Sunday talk shows, saying how they might revisit the trigger law, if in fact, *Roe v. Wade* is reversed and the trigger law in that state takes effect because the current trigger law in Arkansas would not even allow exceptions for rape or incest and the Republican governor there was saying, yeah, well, we may, uh, have to go back and look at that a little bit. And so that's, that's how extreme some of these things are and how much it's going to scramble politics at the state level, potentially, if this happens, right?

[00:26:52] **SUSAN PAGE:** And, that's right. And actually some Republicans are a little nervous about these trigger laws that have no exception for rape or incest. Some of them don't have an exception for life of the mother. But you know, at the same time, the governor of Arkansas was being a little bit queasy about the lack of exceptions. On another Sunday show, the governor of Mississippi refused to rule out the idea of moving on to ban certain forms of contraception if we get the *Roe v. Wade* decision overturned.

## **Voting, Primaries and Redistricting in the South Part 2 - The Takeaway - Air Date 5-28-22**

[00:27:23] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** You mentioned Ted Budd. As a North Carolinian, my primary election campaign in terms of what I was seeing on television and campaign ads, was that Republican primary campaign, and then Democrat Cheri Beasley on the Democratic side winning. Beasley is an African American woman who served as Chief Justice of the North Carolina Supreme Court. Right now, there are no Black women in the U.S. Senate. She now becomes a candidate for that office.

Do you have a sense that the National Democratic Party is going to pour resources and attention into this North Carolina Senate race, or, again, are all eyes still on Georgia and that gubernatorial race?

[00:28:03] **MAYA KING:** I don't have a clear sense yet of what the resourcing will look like in other states outside of Georgia, but I will say, so far, I have not seen that much attention being paid to Cheri Beasley's race. I imagine that will

change soon because she has been widely discussed as a very compelling candidate, and one with a real shot of, first, diversifying the Senate, but two, also maintaining the very slim Democratic majority in that chamber.

Though I will note what's interesting about that primary, she was the very obvious front runner for many months, has been raising a ton of money. She was able to be very successful in that primary, in large part, because North Carolina Democrats, top brass, old-guard leaders, folks who have influence in the party in the state, really coalesced behind her campaign very early on and made the decision that a Black woman candidate should be the person who represents the party in 2022.

I think that is a shift with that state party in figuring out who the standard-bearer was going to be. Of course, we know Jeff Jackson was another pretty formidable candidate in that primary in its early months in late 2021. He himself dropped out and endorsed Cheri Beasley shortly after. We know now he's running for the House, so may very well make it to Washington at a different capacity.

That did stand out to me because it represents a bit of a sea change, I think, in politics, and particularly the South now, where more parties are understanding, "Look, we have these huge, huge populations of people of color," and while places like the governor's mansion and the Senate have been very elusive to non-White candidates, one important first step is making sure that the party infrastructure is lined up behind them to at least give these candidates a fighting chance at being successful in November.

[00:30:14] **Melissa Harris-Perry:** I can talk North Carolina politics all day, but let's go down to Texas for a second because there is not a clear front-runner in this San Antonio area race. Obviously, all eyes are on this area of the country right now because of the, still, heartbreaking gun violence that we saw this week at a elementary school, for goodness sake. Let's talk about Jessica Cisneros and Representative Henry Cuellar. It's the 28th House District. What's going on in this district?

[00:30:46] **MAYA KING:** It's pretty clear that we are in recount territory. This is another race that has very quickly become emblematic of a number of trends in national politics and in Democratic politics, more specifically. Mr. Cuellar is a pro-gun and anti-abortion Democrat, not something that you see at all in the House of Representatives. In fact, he is the only anti-abortion Democrat in the House, and I believe one of the only Democrats with an A rating from the National Rifle Association, and that has really, I mean, really frustrated and

angered the progressives who stood behind Jessica Cisneros, in large part because she was a shift from both of those things.

She was in support of women's access to abortion, and also in supportive of more stringent gun legislation or things that would limit access to firearms among 18-year-olds, in particular in Texas where you have few sweeping gun laws in place. What they've pointed out here is just against the backdrop of national politics, for national Democratic leaders, folks like Nancy Pelosi, Jim Clyburn, and Steny Hoyer who did support Henry Cuellar, for them to do so, progressives have pointed out that there's a little bit of hypocrisy in what they're saying about these policies and how much they want to support candidates who champion gun control legislation and expand abortion access but have lined up behind this one person.

I'll also note that the 28th District in Texas actually shares a border. It borders the 23rd district where Uvalde is located to its south. It's about a two-hour drive from Uvalde, Texas.

This is literally close to home for a number of people there. I think folks are understanding now just how important their votes are, but also how important national resources and storylines matter to these races.

## **How Moderates Serve The Right - Second Thought - Air Date 12-17-21**

[00:32:57] **JT CHAPMAN - HOST, SECOND THOUGHT:** Centrists and moderates in the US -- the two terms are pretty much interchangeable -- are people and politicians who are not entirely satisfied with the political programs of either major political party. Unlike people who reject both parties from the opposite ends of the spectrum, moderates are most at home in the supposed bipartisan middle.

They usually like saying things like, "We're neither left nor right." We'll get to that sentence in a minute. But first, we might want to understand centrists a little better.

If we are to assume the definition of left and right as historically transcendent terms about the stance one has towards present society, and values like egalitarianism, being a centrist doesn't really make sense.



Over time, movements that start out on the left, like liberalism, republicanism, or even parliamentary monarchy become solidly right-wing movements without ever changing their ideology, because they replaced the old right and become contested by the new, more radical left. In such a position, centrism becomes nothing more than a conservative ideology. Its prime directive is resistance to change. And as a result, it's not, as they claim, neither left nor right. It's just right wing. It might've been on the left in yesterday's society, but now that the goals of the old left are the established order and have become the new conservative right, preserving present society with only incremental and moderate reform, which is what centrists believe in, becomes a profoundly conservative worldview.

And it makes sense that this is where moderacy settles. Because it has to compromise between two completely opposing ideas, changing society in a new way, or keeping it the same. Think about classic central statements like, "We just need a mix of socialism and capitalism," an idea that makes absolutely zero sense, when you understand the two ideologies and that their base disagreement about the ownership of the means of production makes them fundamentally incompatible.

Okay. This all might seem a little confusing. Let's get away from the theory for a second and look at something concrete, like the Biden brand of centrism.

[00:35:02] **JOE BIDEN:** I know how to make government work. [cheering crowd]

I've worked across the aisle to reach consensus to make government work in the past. I can do that again with your help.

To me, our principles must never be compromised. But compromise itself is not a dirty word. Consensus is not a weakness. It's the only way where our founders down the road there thought it was the one where we could govern. It was necessary. It was designed in the way the Constitution requires consensus.

[00:35:38] **JT CHAPMAN - HOST, SECOND THOUGHT:** This speech is Biden's freebird. Biden, like pretty much every centrist, is a big fan of compromise: reaching across the aisle to get past political gridlock is the doctrine of American centrism.

And when you hear him talk about it, you can kind of get sucked into the idea that this form of compromise is what makes politics, and therefore society, progress. It appeals to our vision of the democratic ideal, a society in which

everyone gathers around the table to discuss an issue and then comes to a mutual decision that compromises on the various interests represented by the assembly.

And if after all, nobody compromises, we might very well not get anywhere. In American politics, this is anything but democratic though. And far from leading to the progress we're promised, we get a government that stagnates or actively pursues regressive, reactionary politics.

Take immigration: for over a year, we heard just about every Democrat call out the very real far-right policies enacted by the Trump admin at the Mexican border. One of these was the invocation of Title 42, a policy choice that might as well be called, "Oh, it really is just that easy." At the start of the pandemic, the Trump administration used the pretext of national health and COVID-19 to close the Southern border pretty much completely. Nobody comes in and a whole lot of people go out. It was a brilliant success for conservatives and reactionaries, and a massive step back in immigration law. And to this day, Title 42 still stands.

No, sorry, that makes it seem like people aren't paying attention to it. The Biden administration is defending it tooth and nail in the courts. True to the spirit of compromise, Biden changed the application of the rule so that it would no longer apply to unaccompanied minors, but on the backend, has used it to expel around 700,000 migrants, far more than the Trump administration ever achieved with its paltry 450,000. Simultaneously, Biden has also continued the construction of the border wall, has led the infamous "Do not come" campaign, and left untouched migrant detention facilities. You'll remember them as concentration camps during the Trump presidency.

Now it's not that Biden has done nothing for progressive immigration politics. He's reinstated DACA and done work to reunite separated families. But the majority of his platform has been tweaking Trump-era policies in the spirit of compromise, rather than reversing them entirely and treating them like the indefensible right-wing policies that they are.

Centrism isn't incremental progress in these circumstances. Malcolm X said it best.

[00:38:13] **INTERVIEWER:** You feel, however, that we're making progress in this country?

[00:38:18] **MALCOLM X:** No, no, I will never say that progress is being made. If you stick a knife in my back nine inches and pull it out six inches, there's no progress. You pull it all the way out. That's not progress. The progress is healing the wound that the blow made. They won't even admit the knife is there.

[00:38:33] **JT CHAPMAN - HOST, SECOND THOUGHT:** When reactionary and far-right politics are so dominant in a society as the US and so regularly find their way to institutions of power or are baked in right from the start, the centrist stance of compromise and incremental retroactive change allows for politics to jump to the right without ever really coming back.

How many politicians today pretend that there's a reasonable compromise between the "we need healthcare" left and the "we need an ethno state" right? Title 42 still stands because the myopic compromise of moderate ideology fails to take into account longer political trends.

There are of course, some exceptions to the rightward shift of American politics, but the attachment to moderation at all costs makes any left-wing legislation a blip in what is otherwise a sea of reactionary bravado.

But most centrists don't like this, and that's not how they think about themselves. They don't like the idea that they're just a mushy average of the left and the right, or a simple tool of conservative politics. Instead, moderates describe their stance something like this: "I don't care whether something comes from the left or the right. I just look at the idea and judge it on its own merit." Here the tricky centrist thinks he's gotten us. We couldn't possibly disagree with the idea of sensibly considering multiple options and forming an opinion based on rational cost and benefit analyses. And he's right. But at the end of the day, centrism falls right back into the same place, whether it sees its role as averaging out the left and the right or picking and choosing from each side.

And that's because the Overton window is so small and so skewed in the US. The choices centrist make are limited by the acceptable politics they are contextualized in. And the American political spectrum being so stunted toward the right, with only figures like Bernie Sanders and his social democratic politics even approaching the left, means that centrism will, by default, fall into the conservative, stagnatory, or even regressive role.

There just aren't that many options to choose from. And they're mostly on the same side anyway. Even if the centrist voter is a careful and considerate pragmatist who doesn't blindly follow the party line and thinks entirely for

themselves on every topic and political debate, the inevitable fact that they will be picking and choosing policies from the fascistic Trumpism in the Republican party and the neoliberal capitalism of the Democrats, to the extent that they can even be differentiated at times, means they'll never actually consider the full range of political debate, because the left isn't prominently represented.

The result is the center conserves far more than it progresses. And when it chooses to conserve something built by the right, it actively engages in regressive reactionary politics.

There's also the issue that politicians who call themselves "the center" aren't really doing so in good faith. While they may represent the center between elected officials, the actual center of the American people is far more to the left on many key issues than the center of the American political class. Just look at this clip, featuring celebrity centrist Joe Lieberman.

[00:41:34] **INTERVIEWER:** Your new book is called The Centrist Solution. You were a famous quote, unquote, "centrist senator." And yet my issue with that word is that centrist doesn't necessarily reflect the American people's views. I want to pull up some polling. Here's some of the measures in that Build Back Better bill that "centrists" like Manchin and Sinema want to get rid of. Here's how popular they are: hugely popular across the spectrum. 83% support, 84% support, 73% support. And yet you and Joe Manchin and Kyrsten Sinema opposed, many of those measures that the American people overwhelmingly support. So the question is, how in the world does that make you a centrist? Surely, based on that polling, Bernie Sanders is closer to the center of American politics and public opinion than you are or Joe Manchin is.

[00:42:18] **SENATOR JOE LIEBERMAN:** Yeah, I don't, I don't think so, but it's a great question. That's not happening enough now. We could probably get some of those good things done on that list if people, instead of trying to push it through, we'd sit down and talk to each other and agree.

[00:42:33] **JT CHAPMAN - HOST, SECOND THOUGHT:** And here we get back to that MLK quote. It's absurd to think that any moderate Democrats or any Republican would ever agree to any of these policies that have overwhelming support among Americans, if the only difference was that they were sat down and talked to as opposed to having things "pushed through." There is no way that moderate Democrats like Manchin, Sinema or Biden are going to be convinced by good argumentation presented politely when that is contending with the massive sums of money changing hands to make sure they remain spoilers.

MLK made it very clear. The moderates' role in politics is to slow things down to a trickle. Justice gets delayed further and further, never actually realized despite decades of promises, allowing for millions of people to continue suffering injustice and hundreds of thousands more to be brought into the fold. It's trite, but justice delayed is justice denied.

## **Progressive's Path To Victory Is Clear...If They Decide To Follow It - The Majority Report - Air Date 3-29-22**

[00:43:28] **EMMA VIGELAND - CO-HOST, THE MAJORITY PREORT:** Well, frankly, I feel that without a coordinated offensive, like the one that you're advocating for where it's a broad policy set that includes rights for all Americans, economic rights. And I think the theme of the show today is democratic leadership failures. And it's just these tweaks to the system, you're ceding the framing to the right wing in the way that you describe, Harvey.

So, in talking about the response to the shooting, we were saying how there needs to be a massive shift in leadership. That there's an absence of imagination that I think is inherent to this. And they wouldn't even entertain these concepts, frankly.

[00:44:14] **HARVEY KAYE:** Alex might well mention that the candidates, at least that his organization, Progressive Democrats, have embraced and endorsed, have themselves been asked whether they could take this on as part of their mission. And I'll just, before we get into that, I'll just say that my greatest hope was that Nina Turner was going to win in Cleveland, because she was so enthusiastic about this. And I thought she would be -- excuse the metaphor -- the vehicle to take this into the progressive caucus, or at least into The Squad to -- the word "rejuvenate" is improper because they're all much younger than I am -- but to revive the energies that we saw at the outset of their formation. Alan, I'll leave that to you.

[00:44:54] **ALAN MINSKY:** Yeah, no. I mean, it's really a sort of crazy that the progressive movement writ large doesn't lead more with economics. I mean, simply put and for decades, and currently at this moment with inflationary concerns, economics is polling as the top concern for the American public. Okay. Right there you have to speak to the electorate. Okay? The left progressive movement has allowed itself to be defined by basically jerks, like Omar, as being all about messaging that suffocates public discourse. Okay? Or

whatever issue of the day they want to highlight as what the left progressives are about.

You actually look at the work of the actual progressives in Congress, in this Congress last year, and what they were focused on, just absolutely laser focused on, was making all of the statutes in Build Back Better more economically progressive. You know, the Senate right would say, no, this goes too far. They would take it another direction. They'd even propose something better. So the actual work they were doing was on core economics.

And really if we had a unified left progressive movement, which we need to have, because we're looking at the absence of a leading progressive presidential candidate for 2024. And we really need to have coordination where economic messaging is really front and center, what we stand for, because these are incredibly popular positions, when you fill in the public policy positions for all 10 of those points. I mean, you look at the polling, you look at the polling among Democrats, registered Democrats, and it's an astronomical blowout that we should be winning all of these elections.

Now we know incumbency, the power of incumbency, the power of money, and all of that can do to pollute the airwaves in these small congressional districts, can really skew the results. And that's what we're seeing across the country. We had a victory against massive amounts of money in Pennsylvania last week. And also one now that's official out in Oregon. But my word, these are difficult. Buying congressional races is an easy thing to do in the years since Citizens United.

So how do we face that? We face that with, basically, run a national unified messaging campaign, as best as possible. It's going to have some fluctuations here and there. But if you lead with economics on that -- and by the way, this is in no way abandoned any of the other issues; by all measures, the progressive movement is going to be the greatest ally for the transgender movement, for all of the issues that otherwise are being spoken about. But this needs to come up as really the top central focus of the issue of the progressive left, one, because it's a winning hand no two, because it was a winning hand. And one, because it's already the work that we stand for, it's the most difficult lift. Because let's face it, American big money, American capital in all of its power and force is going to be arrayed against this message in ways that they're not going to be against other messages.

[00:47:31] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** So what is the mechanism for that? I mean, , Nina Turner was outspent, or at least, in



terms of this outside money, it came in hard. And we watched Cisneros have to, she sort of tempered her message a little bit, I think, for a changing district.

But again, there were incumbency forces in the Democratic leadership and NRA and that weigh in on this. They're not going away. Right? I mean, those things exist. What is the mechanism -- and I accept the premise that there needs to be sort of like a 20,000, 30,000 foot type of narrative that stretches, that provides its own umbrella for, and this is that message -- but what's the apparatus that gets everyone on the same page, that carries that message, so that when Nina Turner or Summer Lee was able to pull it off in Pennsylvania, but if you want to increase the sort of percentage of success, I guess, what is the apparatus that provides at least the context for those races to happen and give them a slight leg up on day one?

[00:48:40] **ALAN MINSKY:** Right. Well, obviously it takes a lot of internal coordination among the progressive left, which is a very difficult thing to achieve for a whole bunch of reasons that I think all of us talking are relatively familiar with.

But from the point of view of Progressive Democrats of America, which is one of the organizations that's at the table with organizations like Our Revolution, Justice Democrats, all the way out on the left wing to DSA, I mean, we'll be advocating for this over the next period.

The midterm elections are of course a different dynamic than the presidential races. But again, are we going to have a really powerful, progressive champion and the 2024 primaries? If we do, then we certainly piggyback off of a candidate like Bernie Sanders, who would be leading with this.

If Elizabeth Warren runs -- and of course PDA, if people don't know we were the original Bernie Sanders PAC, we are very proud to be the organization that brought the Bernie Sanders presidential campaign to the world. We drafted him as the only organization to run the "Run, Bernie, Run" drafting effort and going all the way back to 2013.

But if you look at a candidate like Elizabeth Warren, for all the foibles and difficulties she had with her race, she clearly does lead on economic matters. And I think, you look at the presidential candidates and you can see that if they're going to compete, they understand how prominent this has to be. But it gets dissipated by the time you get to the midterms.

And in all due respect, we probably have about four years to figure that one out, but I think we should start working on it right away. And certainly PDA will be advocating for this. Clearly it's going to be a central focus of our advocacy going forward. And I do think the results would be better if we're going to come out of this with seven to 10 members of the Squad, I bet you we can add to that considerably or would have added to that in this cycle. Because we don't know where the world will be in four years.

[00:50:11] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** What's the number? Is there a number? I mean, does anybody have a number? I gotta look at, we watched the Freedom Caucus and we never knew how many people were in the Freedom Caucus. That was one of their features. We're not going to -- it's like Fight Club type of thing. And I'm not exactly sure what the value of that was other than they could probably project they didn't have defections because nobody knew whether or not the people were in there anyways. You can see the value of it on some level, and it's certainly consistent with the brand in terms of lack of transparency.

But does someone have a number?

[00:50:43] **ALAN MINSKY:** We're 50 to 75, actually. So focus on the Squad is a little disingenuous. You look at people like Jim McGovern out of Massachusetts, he's rock solid with us right there, but it's less than the progressive caucus.

[00:50:55] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** What's the number we need? Like where is --

[00:50:58] **ALAN MINSKY:** 216.

[00:50:59] **SAM SEDER - HOST, THE MAJORITY REPORT:** Okay. I understand.

[00:51:01] **ALAN MINSKY:** Look, I mean, one of the things we're proposing, you know how absurd the historical moment is? Of course this is an incredibly complex question. But if you look at America's top allies around the world, throughout the whole cold war period, we know what countries they were: Western Europe, South Korea, Japan. I mean, some of them because of conquest and all that. But basically they all have this economic contract, social contract, and we don't. And then even more of a craziness about it is of course the Roosevelt and Truman administration actually went in and drafted a lot of these constitutions that guaranteed the existence of social democracy.

Now, neoliberalism has chipped away at it, but look, not really. They all have free universal healthcare. They largely have all free public education through higher education. That even just got expanded in Germany under Angela Merkel. So we're the one country that doesn't have -- this is not a utopian scheme that's impossible to imagine how it would be operating.

## **Nina Turner: Democrats Must Decide If They Are “Party of the Corporatists or Party of the People” - Democracy Now! - Air Date 5-18-22**

[00:51:54] **AMY GOODMAN:** Nina, welcome back to Democracy Now! Your take on the primaries yesterday, and particularly the role of big money and how you saw it playing out? And then we'd like you to talk about what you saw happening in your own race.

[00:52:08] **NINA TURNER:** Sure. I certainly agree with my colleague David Sirota that there are some wins from yesterday for progressives. But here is the caution here: that we know that these super PACs, along with the corporatist Dems and, as David laid out, the oligarchs — because that's exactly what they are — when you have cryptocurrency billionaires, oil baronesses, other corporate interests infusing or injecting themselves into these local races, it is a problem, because what they do is they drown out the voices and the will. We don't truly know what the will of the people would be if these super PACs would not jump in in the way that they do. And they seem to — not seem — they particularly target women of color and, going even deeper than that, Black women.

So, let's take State Representative Summer Lee. She had a 25-point lead before they came in there. That is very reminiscent of the lead that I had last year. When these forces jumped in there, they closed in, and it was a squeaker. And it still is a squeaker to this moment, although the Representative is claiming victory, a victory that was hard fought, but it should not have ever been that close. And thank God you had some Democratic leaders in her state, in her cities, that stood up to both AIPAC and DMFI and called it out and called it what it was. And so, I am so proud of her and the work that her team has done.

In other races, you know, whether or not a progressive won or lost is no reflection these days on how hard their respective teams were working. I should know. It is very much a reflection on this dark money, super PAC money that

comes in to sway the will of the voters. And one more point on this, Amy: And those forces do not care about the quality of life, or lack thereof, of the people who actually live, work and play in these communities. All they care about is buying elections. And this caution is vitally important for all of those of us who do believe in democracy, regardless of what candidate you support. This is about making sure that the voices of the people who actually live in these communities are not drowned out. And that is happening all over this country. It's coming to a district near you.

[00:54:27] **JUAN GONZALEZ - CO-HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** And, Nina Turner, could you talk about the role of AIPAC and the Democratic Majority for Israel in your race and why they felt it was so important to defeat you?

[00:54:39] **NINA TURNER:** Well, twice. I mean, they spent over — combined, between special election last year and the election this year, upwards of \$6 million combined. Last year, in the special election, \$12 million was spent — that's between both campaigns and the super PACs who came in — very expensive race, for a seat that is a Democratic seat.

You know, certainly, I was told by some of my allies, and some allies that I have who do do the dance with the corporatist side from time to time, but they support me, asked the question, you know: Why are these people coming at you like this? And I'm just talking about the alliance between corporatist Democrats and these super PACs. And this person was told that I was not the right kind of Democrat. In that, they meant that I don't bend, that I come from the Congresswoman Shirley Chisholm school of Democrats, and that is unbought and unbossed.

These people are pouring in this kind of money because they want to be able to control the outcomes that happen on the congressional level. This is it, plain and simple. You don't invest that kind of money without expecting a return. There is nothing so spectacular about the people who they endorsed and who they supported, whether it was my race in particular, especially so, or any other races across the country. They are investing in corporatist-type Democrats because they want a return on their investment.

Let's look at the Iran deal. Many of us remember that that was one of the biggest foreign policy accomplishments of President Obama's presidency. You got President Biden pushing for that. And you have the person who benefited from DMFI PAC money and AIPAC money standing against, with other

Democrats — I think it was about 18 in total — against that deal, one great example of them getting a return on their investment right away.

But what happens in a district like mine? Ohio is the poorest city in the country right now. The poorest. One in every two children go to bed hungry at night. You have suffering in Cleveland and the greater Cleveland area. But those PACs that come in here, they don't care about that. You think that cryptocurrency billionaire care whether or not the babies in Cleveland or greater Cleveland get a chance to eat, or whether their parents are making a living wage? No, they don't care about that. All they wanted to do was to buy the election. So they rented it last year. They flat-out bought it this year. And so, elections are being decided in boardrooms instead of ballot boxes.

[00:57:09] **AMY GOODMAN:** But, Nina Turner, what does that say about the well-known progressives in Congress? I mean, you have last year, when you ran in the special election, the Congressional Progressive Caucus supported you. But this year they endorsed your opponent, who had become, of course, the incumbent, Congressmember Shontel Brown. Why do you think this is? And then you have the many CPC progressive members — Pramila Jayapal, Ilhan Omar, Cori Bush, Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib, Jamaal Bowman — who didn't endorse any candidate this year, though they did you last year.

[00:57:47] **NINA TURNER:** Yeah, well, Amy, I don't — can't answer for the individuals. I mean, they have to make a decision for themselves as to why. People get a right to endorse or not endorse, and I get that. As a political person, I truly get that. What I will say about the Congressional Progressive Caucus as a whole is that they were wrong. And I'm really excited to see progressive leaders across the country — and I'm talking about leaders who lead caucuses, from California to Nevada to New Mexico to Iowa, people — those progressive leaders — it was about 11 of them in total, all across the country. Once the CPC did what they did, they came out and made it very clear who the real freedom-fighting progressive in my race was. And I applaud them, and I hope that they stay together and continue to do those things.

The progressive leadership, elected leadership, has a decision to make: Either they are going to side with corporatist Democrats and not do anything that is immensely different from them, or they are going to be the difference. Either they're going to complement the movement, or they are not.

I will say that Congresswoman Jayapal, in an article — I think it was in Punch Bowl — did say, after being pressed — because the movement pressed the CPC; they didn't do this on their own — saying that they may have to rethink,

or they should rethink, how they do endorsements, not to endorse people right away, and to also look at what type of entities are supporting these candidates, to determine whether or not they are truly progressive. The person in my race joined that caucus because she knew full well that I was going to run again. It was all for cover.

But people are suffering in this country, all over this country, not just in my district. And we need the progressives inside that Congress to be the ones who stand up and call it what it is. That was not done in my race this time around. I do want to thank Senator Bernie Sanders. He was with me the first time, with me the second time. And Congresswoman Ocasio-Cortez came in, as well. So, I do appreciate that.

[00:59:53] **JUAN GONZALEZ - CO-HOST, DEMOCRACY NOW!:** And briefly, your thoughts, in terms heading into the November elections, what the prospects look for progressive candidates and a progressive agenda to move forward?

[01:00:07] **NINA TURNER:** Yeah, the agenda is strong. We know that the overwhelming of the American people, if you don't put the label on it, they agree with that agenda. Look, gas in Ohio is \$4.55. It is continuing to go up. It's going up all over the country. The minimum wage here is \$8.80, a little higher than the federal minimum wage, which is \$7.25. Juan, look at what people have to do just to survive. They are barely surviving. So, the agenda that is being put forward by those on my side of this movement — Medicare for All, living wages, making sure people can unionize, protecting voting rights — the overwhelming majority of people believe in it.

What is missing is intestinal fortitude on the side of the Democratic Party. The Democratic Party as a whole have to make a decision: Is this the party of the corporatists, or is it going to be the party of the people? So far, it is failing and proven that it is the party of the corporatists. For example, the child tax credit expired [inaudible], that cut childhood poverty in half, which was a beautiful thing, a tremendous policy push by the Biden administration. Gone. So now those same children that were pulled out are now back in, at a critical moment where you've got the pandemic still waging — can't be done with the pandemic, the pandemic is not done with us — and then you have inflation that is eating every little dollar that the poor and the working poor and the barely middle class have.

So I want to say to the progressive movement: Let's stay. We're going to keep on pushing for the policies that change material conditions. And the Democratic



Party has a decision to make. And one more point on that: They will do — the corporatist wing —

[01:01:48] **AMY GOODMAN:** We have 10 seconds.

[01:01:49] **NINA TURNER:** The corporatist wing of the Democratic Party will do anything to try to defeat progressive candidates. We cannot stand for that. We must continue to fight. And we will.

## Summary 6-8-22

[01:01:58] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** We've just heard clips today, starting with *Democracy Now!*, giving an overview of several primary results and explaining how conservative Democrats are working with big money to crush progressives. *The Bradcast* looked at more races and more big money. *The Takeaway* examined the Georgia governor's race that will be a rematch between Stacey Abrams and Brian Kemp. *The Brian Lehrer Show* highlighted some recent polling on the electoral importance of inflation, racism, and abortion. *The Takeaway* looked at the North Carolina Senate race, as well as the pro-gun, anti-abortion Democrat who seems to have squeaked by his progressive challenger in Texas. *Second Thought* explained the fundamental conservatism of moderates. And *The Majority Report* discussed the progressive messaging strategy needed to win.

That's what everyone heard, but members also heard a bonus clipped from *Democracy Now!* speaking with Nina Turner about the role of dark money, progressive endorsements, and the progressive agenda.

To hear that and have all of our bonus content delivered seamlessly to the new members-only podcast feed that you'll receive, sign up to support the show at [BestoftheLeft.com/support](https://BestoftheLeft.com/support), or shoot me an email requesting a financial hardship membership, because we don't let a lack of funds stand in the way of hearing more information.

And now, we'll hear from you.

## Should Justice Sotomayor retire this year? - Woody from Washington DC

[01:03:18] **VOICEMAILER WOODY FROM DC:** Hi, Jay!, this is Woody from DC. I was wondering though, whether you think justice Sotomayor should retire this year. I mean, she's in incredible justice and I know this is morbid, but she's turning 68 in a couple of weeks. I know that betting markets are giving Democrats a 78% chance of losing the Senate this year. And if they lose it, electoral analysts like David Shore think that Democrats have to win three consecutive Senate elections by an average of six points in order to take back the chamber, which is really difficult to do. And so, I know Shore and other electoral analysts like G. Elliott Morris of The Economist, formerly of The Economist, they think the Democrats may not take the Senate back until the mid 2030s or even later, at which point Sotomayor would have to make it to her mid eighties.

So, I think there's maybe a 50% chance of her being replaced by a Republican if she doesn't step down this year. And, you know, if she dies, I'm just worried about a seven-two Republican court that's more likely to overturn gay marriage, more likely to ban abortion nationwide, more likely to gut voting rights even further, more likely to enable more school shootings, more likely to block like almost any government effort to deal with climate change.

So I was curious if you think that she should step down this year to avoid that potential catastrophe. Thanks for listening.

## **Final comments on the extreme measures needed to stabilize our political system**

[01:04:37] **JAY TOMLINSON - HOST, BEST OF THE LEFT:** Thanks to all of those who called into the voicemail line or wrote in their messages to be played as VoicedMails. If you'd like to leave a comment or question of your own to be played on the show, you can record a message at 202-999-3991, or write me a message to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

And thanks today to Woody for his call. And I've got to say that was a bit of a push-pull, you know. Are you in favor of averting likely catastrophe or would you be okay with the worst case scenario coming to pass? Basically. So since the correct answer to what he's questioned is a little too obvious, let's back up a bit.

Firstly, I would say that in a rational system, this conversation would be completely unnecessary. The death of a single person in a country of over 300 million should not send shockwaves through our political system. It shouldn't

even be a blip. And there are a lot of ways to fix this. We could have 50 Supreme Court justices making each one of them less important. We could have term limits that create a more regular churn of justices and makes it much less likely that one would be replaced due to death.

I think I've heard an idea about standardizing the replacement schedule so that every four-year presidential term replaces two justices. And I'm sure there are other ideas.

But what all of this points to is an overarching problem with our current politics. To discuss these kinds of major changes is not to suggest breaking our systems and traditions, but is the inevitable response to the system being broken and abused already.

So to be clear, we've had unfair and undemocratic systems in place since the beginning, but almost any system can withstand moderate problems as ours has. It's when those inherently unfair systems are then abused -- like in the cases of the filibuster and Mitch McConnell's refusal to allow Democratic presidents to name Supreme Court justices -- that the relatively modest problem of an undemocratic Senate converts into a fundamentally destabilizing force.

And destabilization is really at the heart of what we are witnessing in US politics right now. And everyone should be against that, unless you're a revolutionary hoping for a collapse from which your vision of a better system can rise from the ashes. To each their own.

But for more examples, moving from the Senate to the House and state houses, gerrymandering, I would argue, is causing a similar level of destabilization, again due to abuse. Up until 2010, gerrymandering was a pretty bi-partisan pastime and the tools in use for fairly rudimentary. So the damage was relatively limited and the two sides mostly canceled each other out, when seen from the national level.

Now I would still argue it's bad. I would have wished that it had gone away centuries ago.

But after the 2010 census, Republicans in states around the country began using highly specialized mapping technology to redraw maps in a way that was never possible before, way more accurate than ever before, opening the door to extremely uncompetitive congressional districts. Which mean a couple of things: that whichever party the district favors will basically choose the representative in the primary without much concern for whether they're able to

win the general election, because of course they will. So in the case of 2010, Republicans not only managed to give themselves more seats, often supermajorities at the state level, which was way out of proportion for the votes they actually received.

But then the second effect kicks in, which is that the types of candidates who began winning started being more and more extreme, because they didn't have to worry about the general election, starting with the tea party and the Freedom Caucus, which morphed into the MAGA candidates. And now even QAnon followers, right?

So, okay. Politics is war by other means and all's fair in love and war. So the stability of the system could have been maintained, maybe, by Democrats just responding in kind to these same systems, gerrymandered the hell out of blue states and relevel the playing field, for the most part. Well, had they done that, it's possible that it would have turned out to be true. But upon seeing the terrible unfairness and destabilizing effects of gerrymandering, Democrats in blue states went the other direction. States like California and New York in particular implemented independent redistricting commissions to take the process out of the hands of legislators altogether. And at least New York changed the constitution to ban partisan gerrymandering. To which I say, good for them! Believing in good, fair government and taking action on those beliefs.

But then as the decade rolls by the destabilization of the system becomes more and more evident. On one hand, you've got the Senate breaking records in the number of filibusters being used to block legislation, plus the blocking of what should have been Obama's third Supreme Court nomination. And then on the House side and in the states, Republican-run states continue to punch way above their weight, thanks to their severe gerrymandering, not to mention voter suppression. While blue states continue to mostly play fair, so they send more Democrats to Congress in the state houses, yes, but not in numbers out of step with the actual votes received.

And the system begins to shake itself apart. Democrats begin to see the system as illegitimate because the moderate problems of unfairness have blossomed into major problems. And Republicans begin to see the system as illegitimate because they've allowed themselves to get so extreme through their gerrymandering that they've effectively become an authoritarian cult of personality, and reality doesn't matter so much anymore.

Which brings us to now. And Democrats have to decide on all levels of government what they are going to do to respond to the current situation, which is far out of step from the normal.

Well, New York's independent commission this past year failed to come to a consensus on their new district map, which pushed the task back to the Democratically-controlled legislature.

Thinking that they were tired of unilaterally disarming in this political war, the Democrats set out to draw a heavily gerrymandered map in New York to help counteract the effects of gerrymandering in red states. But of course, hoisted on their own petard, the state Supreme Court struck down the map as unconstitutionally partisan and appointed an independent expert who ended up drawing a map much more favorable to Republicans.

And some now think that this will be the difference that gives the house over to Republican control.

So should Sonia Sotomayer retire to ensure her seat is filled by a Democrat? Under a rational system, or even under an irrational system, but during more reasonable times, we wouldn't even have to ask or answer questions like that, or carefully plan our strategies around someone's death 10 years in advance.

But that is not the world we live in. And advocating for extreme measures, measures that are primarily intended to bring stability back to the system, like doing away with the filibuster entirely, banning gerrymandering, or better yet, doing away with districts altogether by switching to proportional representation and rebalancing the Senate by making Washington, DC and Puerto Rico states, as well as maybe even considering breaking up California into multiple Democratically-controlled states, should all be seen as the height of reasonableness. Because maintaining the status quo seems to be a recipe for disaster not too far in the future.

And just for fun, copy and paste all those sentiments and apply them to fighting climate change, and you'll understand why the only reasonable actions to advocate for will sound extreme, because sometimes extreme course corrections are required to maintain a previously mundane status quo.

As always, keep the comments coming in at 202-999-3991, or by emailing them to Jay@BestoftheLeft.com.

That is going to be it for today. Thanks to everyone for listening. Thanks to Deon Clark and Erin Clayton for their research work for the show and participation in our bonus episodes. Thanks to the Monosyllabic Transcriptionist Trio, Ben, Ken and now welcoming Brian, but don't worry, he's a team player, he said we can call him Bri. So thanks to the three of them for all of their volunteer work helping put our transcripts together. Thanks to Amanda Hoffman for all of her work on our social media outlets, activism segments, graphic designing, web mastering, and bonus show co-hosting. And thanks to those who support the show by becoming a member or purchasing gift memberships at [BestoftheLeft.com/support](https://BestoftheLeft.com/support), through our Patreon page, or from right inside the Apple Podcast app. Membership is how you get instant access to our incredibly good bonus episodes, in addition to there being extra content and no ads in all of our regular episodes, all through your regular podcast player.

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So coming to you from far outside the conventional wisdom of Washington, DC, my name is Jay!, and this has been the *Best of the Left* podcast coming to you twice weekly, thanks entirely to the members and donors to the show from [BestoftheLeft.com](https://BestoftheLeft.com).