



Speak Out Now

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@sonsocialists

speakoutsocialists.org

mail@speakoutsocialists.org

(510) 343-9105

The 2026 Midterms: The Best Democracy Money Can Buy

The amount of money poured into the elections by the super-rich keeps growing. This midterm election is no different, with billionaires projected to spend \$11.6 billion by election day, the most in U.S. history.

Elon Musk has already spent \$366 million of his own money, not only paying for ads but funding paid canvassers who go door to door trying to influence voters to vote for far-right Republicans across the country who are aligned with Trump. The top 50 individual donors have poured more than \$2.3 billion into midterms, with Republican-leaning donors giving about \$1.54 billion and about \$590 million from Democratic-leaning donors.

In total, the Democrats and Republicans are spending close to the same amounts in this election. Of the top ten candidates running for Congress who've spent the most money, nine of them are Democrats. Billionaires have also poured money into different state ballot measures, trying to block those that would raise their taxes to fund social services, and trying to pass ones that benefit their interests.

To the wealthy, democracy just means the freedom to spend their wealth to get the outcomes they want, whether it's on candidates or ballot measures. They may favor Republicans or Democrats in different elections, but either way, they know that both parties will defend their interests.

At the same time, as billionaires try to get things to go their way, the Trump administration has been maneuvering to tilt the elections in its favor. Over the past two years, it has pushed to give the federal government more power to interfere in elections, bypassing the authority of individual states. It has tried to rewrite voting rules by executive order, demanded states' voter data, and pressured state officials to remove voters, threatening states who refuse with prosecution or lost funding. It has gutted the agencies that oversee elections, raided election offices, refused to rule out deploying federal agents on election day, and laid the groundwork to dispute the results. The courts have blocked some of these moves, but the administration keeps pressing forward to get around them.

And recently, the administration has begun using ICE terror as tool to intimidate voters. For example, there has been increased ICE activity in Central California, with over 100 migrant workers detained in Fresno and Bakersfield. This area includes one of the closest Congressional races in the country, and is in a poor,

majority Latino district, with many agricultural workers, and over two-thirds of the residents receiving Medicaid — the most of any district in the country. There are reports of ICE going to people's houses, setting up random traffic stops, and going to workplaces.

It is no coincidence that the administration is deploying ICE into immigrant communities before the elections. The Trump administration is deeply unpopular because of its policies, including supporting Israel's genocide of Palestinians, terrorizing immigrant communities, waging war on Iran, driving up the cost of living, cutting \$1 trillion from Medicaid over the next decade, catering to billionaires, and jacking up military spending. There have been similar reports of increased ICE activity coming from other states with close races, like Texas and Arizona, and many other states are anticipating similar ICE activity heading into the elections. The Department of Homeland Security has launched a surge in baseless voter-fraud investigations in nine states while also pressuring states to purge voters from the rolls.

What all of this adds up to couldn't be clearer. The Trump administration is doing what it can to intimidate voters and restrict turnout in order to influence the election, and is preparing to possibly contest the election results afterwards if they don't win. And those behind Trump intend to enact even more cuts to our social services, and transfer even more money to billionaires, and the military. They know the population is opposed to these policies and they are trying to intervene in the elections and intimidate us into silence.

The Democrats certainly try to position themselves as an opposition to Trump. And it is easy to see why some people might see a vote for Democrats as a way to vote against the worst of Trump's agenda. But we won't change our situation with just an election. Standing up to their attacks requires more than just voting.

Regardless of how these midterms play out, it will take a much larger social struggle to defend our interests. There is more to democracy than the voting booth. The working class is the majority of the society and it is our work that makes this system run. Workers democracy includes voting, but it also means organizing in our workplaces, schools and neighborhoods to defend each other from all of their attacks. That's the kind of democracy we need to defend.