Speak Out Now

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The People Have Spoken, So What's Next?

The votes in the midterm elections continue to get counted, so the final results are still not in. Despite that, the results and turnout made one thing clear: people are not willing to accept the current political reality and want change. Turnout for this election was the second highest for a midterm in over half of a century. This says something: people are very concerned about the future.

In the face of threats of voter suppression, many who have the right to vote used it to make sure their voice was counted. In the exit polls, major factors that mattered to the majority of people included: government corruption, the cost of living, the war on Iran, attacks by ICE, and AI and data centers. Beyond what was reported at the polls, it was also a response to the open racism and bigotry of the Trump regime and the attempts to roll back the gains of past decades.

On the state level, ballot initiatives addressed those attacks. Three out of the four states voting on abortion rights upheld rights to abortions and reproductive freedom. In addition, Virginia voted to remove the ban of same-sex marriage from its constitution, and Arizona voted not to ban DEI programs in state government and public universities. In four states, measures related to public funding for housing aid and housing development passed. Many local elections focused on using tax dollars towards schools, healthcare, public transit, and young families. 46 out of 47 local measures addressing data centers decided to limit their development.

This election created a number of historic firsts: the first Black, Latino, Native American, and women governors in certain states, and the first Muslim and Native American female senators. Many of those elected are not established politicians. They took on problems that the traditional politicians avoid. The election results showed that people want real change and to be represented by people who respect their concerns and say they are ready to deal with those issues.

Despite the new faces that will enter government in January of 2027, and the hopes for change that they represent, the reality is that the political system that they will be entering is not set up to serve the needs of the majority. They will find themselves tangled in a web of politics, trapped by the compromises that seem necessary to make with other politicians to get small gains for the communities they represent. Meanwhile, the major issues are neglected because they are supposedly too large and complicated, and more so because they don't serve the interests of the billionaires. Problems that the vast majority of people care about – like access to healthcare, wanting a world free from genocide and war, accessible housing and transit, and our daily cost of living – will feel far from reach even with new representatives taking office.

While the elections have pushed some of the representatives of the most exploitative and disgusting parts of the far right out of political office, what is next for us? Voting is not enough! We cannot afford to wait until January and watch to see what comes from the deals made in Congress. There may be some powerful speeches made, especially by the politicians who have been in office for years. They will want to ride this new blue wave.

But talk is cheap. The real gains have come from mass social movements that produced the Civil Rights Act, environmental regulations, women's right to access abortion, workplace protections, and other gains. And even those gains were stopgap measures aimed at slowing the movements and diverting them into seeking reforms within the system, rather than changing the system that produced the problems. As a result, we are still facing the same problems today.

Millions of people voted – demanding real changes. It is time to put our hopes and faith in each other, and in our ability to bring about the changes we need. It is clear that we share anger and hope and a need for change. Those in power have heard our voices. So, now what is next? We don't need to wait on the slow wheels of bureaucratic "change." We can't wait and see what they can do in the political web that could trap them in Washington D.C. or in whatever other office they were elected to.

The hope that people expressed through their activity in the campaigns and through their votes needs to be maintained through action. And something can be done. Whether it is a restoration of Medicaid for millions of people who will otherwise find themselves without healthcare next January, an end to ICE terror in our communities, stopping the construction of data centers, funding decent education, housing, transit, jobs with real living wages, and more. Real change will come from our demands and our organizing. Our future rests in our hands.