

# **United States: Some initial comment on the midterm elections and the issue of abortion**

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**There was no Republican massive “sweep” in the Nov. 8 midterm elections, as many had predicted. What prevented this “sweep” was something the media talking heads got wrong and the posters missed because they didn’t ask the right questions, was that the right to abortion became a deciding factor limiting Republican gains or defeating them.**

The question was directly posed in referenda in five states, where the right to abortion was affirmed, in face of the Supreme Court’s earlier decision to repeal the right to abortion nationally, that was affirmed in the Court’s own 1973 decision granting that right.

In three states, constitutional amendments to make abortion legal in those states were passed.

In two other states the issue was proposed amendments in the negative, to prohibit the right to abortion.

In the first category were Vermont, California and Michigan.

In Vermont the amendment was to affirm the right to personal reproductive autonomy, which includes the right to abortion and contraception. This was passed by 72 to 23 percent.

In California the right to abortion and contraception was on the ballot, which passed 65 percent to 35

In Michigan the amendment was to affirm reproductive freedom in all matter related to pregnancy, that also includes the right to contraception. This was passed 57 percent to 43 percent.

That these amendments included the right to contraception was important because some of the six far right Justices on the Court who voted to repeal the right to abortion raised that they would like to consider making contraception illegal.

In the second category were Montana and Kentucky.

In Montana the proposed amendment would criminalize doctors who didn’t make every effort to save the life of a fetus where there was an attempted abortion, or after any birth. This amendment was defeated by 53 to 47 percent.

In Kentucky, the amendment was to reject any right to abortion, which was defeated 52 to 48 percent.

What makes these votes important is that both states are solidly Republican, which means that many Republican women voted against the amendment.

The vote in Montana and Kentucky reaffirmed a vote in August in Kansas, another solidly Republican

state, where there was a referendum on an amendment stating there was no right to abortion, which was defeated 59 to 41 percent.

What these votes indicated was that abortion rights were the issue that persuaded enough white Republican women to prevent a massive Republican “sweep.” And in many instances resulted in Republican defeats.

One question in the elections was whether Republicans win enough seats in the House of Representatives to turn the slim Democratic majority into a Republican majority.

As of this writing, four senate seats are not yet determined. One of these, is in Georgia, in which neither the Republican or Democrat got a majority, because of a Libertarian candidate, who got two percent. As a result, there will be a runoff election in December.

It appears that the Republicans will get a majority in the House, but not a big majority.

In many states where Republican-controlled legislatures have passed laws that de facto restricted the right to vote for Blacks, Republicans set up “monitors” to weed out “voter fraud” — a thinly disguised attempt to intimidate especially Black voters on November 8.

Violence was expected as a result. But this failed to materialize, as the Republican leadership put the arm on their violent wing they have coddled. One can speculate they did so because of the bad press they got for the attempted violent attack by a Trump supporter against Democratic Speaker of the House Nancy Pelosi, that badly injured her husband at their home in San Francisco while she was in Washington.

Another result of the elections was the defeat of many Republican candidates that Trump had endorsed. There are reports that Trump became furious at this result.

How this will affect the Republicans in 2024, if, as expected, Trump will soon announce his candidacy for the Republican nomination for the presidency again. There are indications that there will be primary challenges to Trump, as many Republican politicians see him as a liability.

One of these may be Ron De Santis, the current Republican governor of Florida. Trump has already singled him out for ridicule, with one of his famous derogatory nicknames for his opponents, calling him “Ron Desanctimonious”.

**Barry Sheppard**

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