

Debate Ammunition: Is Corporate Power Losing Its Grip o...

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THE RICHARD J MURPHY YOUTUBE CHANNEL

DEBATE AMMUNITION

Is Corporate Power Losing Its Grip on Politics?

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Topic

Whether the victory of progressive Dr Abdul El-Sayed over corporate-backed Haley Stevens in the Michigan Democratic Senate primary signals a broader, systemic rejection of corporate-dominated politics both in the USA and beyond.

The video that this Debate Ammunition supports [is available here.](#)

The Core Argument

Voters in Michigan chose Dr Abdul El-Sayed over four-term Representative incumbent Haley Stevens in the Democratic Senate primary, despite El-Sayed spending roughly a quarter of what Stevens spent. Money did not buy the result the establishment wanted.

This result is not isolated. Zohran Mamdani won the New York mayoral race as an avowed democratic socialist. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez holds her seat in Congress. A pattern is forming inside the Democratic Party: corporate-backed candidates are losing to those who promise to fight entrenched power.

The mainstream media's discomfort with this result is revealing. Because media organisations are funded by the same corporate interests as the establishment Democrats, they cannot ask the obvious question of why did voters reject the candidate their money was supposed to deliver, and instead are focussing on whether El-Sayed

can win in November.

The same dynamic is visible in the UK. Labour has accepted donations from big pharma, big tech, and other companies, and policies that serve those interests have followed. The Green Party is growing rapidly, and a disenfranchised left is asking the same questions Michigan's voters just answered at the ballot box.

Key Statistics

Statistic

Figure

Approximate spending ratio: Stevens campaign vs El-Sayed campaign in Michigan primary

4 to 1 in Stevens' favour

Number of terms Haley Stevens had represented Michigan Democrats in Congress before losing this primary

4 terms

Growth in UK Green Party membership (approximate, recent months)

80,000 to 200,000

The Argument Structure

Step 1 — Corporate money failed where it should have dominated:

Haley Stevens had the Democratic Party hierarchy, four terms of Congress incumbency, and four times the campaign budget in the Michigan Senate primary election. She still lost. If money were the decisive force in politics, this result is impossible. That it happened tells you something has changed.

Step 2 — This is a pattern, not a fluke:

Zohran Mamdani won New York's mayoral primary as a declared democratic socialist with Bernie Sanders and AOC behind him. El-Sayed has now won in Michigan. These are not accidents; they are evidence that Democratic primary voters are consistently choosing candidates who promise to fight corporate power over those who are financed by it.

Step 3 — The media response confirms the threat corporate interests feel:

The mainstream media, itself corporate-funded, has responded not by asking why voters made this choice, but by questioning whether El-Sayed can win in November. The framing shifts the story from what voters want to what the establishment fears. That is editorial capture in action.

Step 4 — The UK parallel is direct and demands the same response:

Labour politicians have accepted donations from entities linked to big pharma, big tech, and defence contractors. Policies favouring those sectors follow. The growing Green Party and the left more broadly are raising the same question Michigan's voters answered: should politics serve people or those who fund it? The answer, if we are serious about democracy, can only be one thing.

Their Argument → Your Rebuttal

They Say

Your Response

El-Sayed is too radical, a communist, in Trump's words, and will lose the general election in a swing state like Michigan.

Trump applies the label 'communist' to anyone who proposes that government should serve ordinary people. By that definition, the NHS is communist. The label is designed to shut down the real question, which is not whether El-Sayed is radical but whose interests politics should serve.

On electability: Haley Stevens had four terms, party backing, and four times the money, and still lost to someone with none of those advantages. If corporate politics were the safe route to victory, she would have won. She did not.

This is one primary in one state; it proves nothing about a broader trend.

It is not one primary. Zohran Mamdani won New York's mayoral primary before this. AOC holds her seat. Melat Kiros defeated a 15-term incumbent in Denver. These results are happening across different states, different offices, and different demographics.

The question is not whether these results form a pattern. They clearly do. The question is whether that pattern is large enough to reshape the party, and each successive result makes it harder to dismiss.

Corporate donations do not actually influence policy; politicians make decisions on the merits.

If donations did not influence outcomes, they would stop. No company spends money on politicians as an act of charity.

The evidence is plain: big pharma donates and drug prices are not controlled; defence contractors donate or lobby and defence budgets rise; tech companies donate and regulation stays light. The correlation between donor priorities and policy outcomes is consistent enough to be treated as causation unless very strong evidence to the contrary is produced. It has not been.

Left-wing candidates win primaries but lose general elections; this insurgency cannot translate into governing power.

That is a prediction, not a fact, and it is one the establishment has an interest in promoting. Donald Trump was told exactly the same thing about winning a general election.

More importantly, the argument assumes that the corporate-backed alternative would win. Voters who feel neither party serves them often do not vote at all. A candidate who gives them a reason to vote, and a clear enemy to vote against, may outperform the cautious, donor-safe option that has been demoralising turnout for years.

The One-Liners

“Money can't buy you love, and, as Haley Stevens just found out, it can't buy you a Senate primary either.”

“Corporate Democrats spent four times more and still lost: that is not an upset, that is a verdict.”

“Caring about people is not communism, but calling it that tells you everything about who is afraid of change.”

“The media asks whether El-Sayed can win in November because it cannot bring itself to ask why voters chose him in August.”

“The same corporate interests funding establishment Democrats are funding Labour, and the same voters are starting to notice.”

Questions to Ask

If corporate money is so powerful, why couldn't Haley Stevens' four-to-one spending advantage secure a Michigan primary win?

Which specific companies and industries have donated to Labour, and which policies favouring those industries have followed?

If the mainstream media were genuinely independent, why does its coverage consistently frame left insurgency as an electability problem rather than a democratic signal?

What distinguishes a candidate who takes money from big pharma and then votes against drug price controls from one who is simply bought?

Further Reading

Post

Date

What it covers

[The Democrats in Michigan have chosen to fight. I hope they win.](#)

6 Aug 2026

Richard's direct commentary on El-Sayed's Michigan primary victory and what it means for the Democratic Party's left insurgency.

[The US lesson for the politics of care: be rid of the neoliberals](#)

1 Jul 2026

Analyses the Denver and New York progressive primary wins and the pattern of corporate Democrats being defeated by the left.

[There is space for the left – even in New York](#)

25 Jun 2025

Examines Mamdani's socialist mayoral campaign in New York, backed by Sanders and AOC, as early evidence of the insurgency.

[Is capitalism undermining democracy?](#)

19 Apr 2026

Sets out how mobile capital has decisively shifted power away from democratic governments and towards corporate interests.

[It's time to end all political donations](#)

26 Mar 2026

Makes the case for state-funded political parties and a ban on corporate donations as the structural fix to corporate capture.

[The Greens: a new force in British politics](#)

27 Feb 2026

Explains the Green Party's rapid growth as the UK parallel to the US left insurgency, challenging Labour's corporate-friendly drift.