Funding the Future

Will Democrats change the USA?

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The Democrats have won an extraordinary victory in America’s midterm elections. But will they really change the USA, or will corporate power, billionaire influence and neoliberalism continue to dominate US politics?

Winning elections is not the same as changing the political system. That is the central question I explore in this video.

The Democrats now have an opportunity to challenge Donald Trump and the political establishment that has allowed corporate interests to dominate American democracy for decades. But will they take it?

Newly elected politicians such as James Talarico offer genuine hope. His challenge to billionaire influence, including Elon Musk’s enormous financial intervention in Texas, suggests that a different politics might be possible.

But hope is not enough. America’s political system remains dominated by wealthy donors, corporate lobbying, monopolies, and the consequences of the Citizens United election-funding ruling. And many Democrats remain deeply embedded in that system.

I argue that the Democrats face a fundamental choice. They can manage the existing system, or they can transform it.

That would mean challenging corporate power, reforming campaign finance, tackling monopolies, confronting political corruption and replacing neoliberalism with a politics of care.

The next two years will determine whether the Democrats have the courage to make that choice before the 2028 Presidential election.

The question is, will they change America, or merely govern it under the existing rules?

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oz1ax1jDp1o?si=sRDgevJquRbSxj6y

This is the audio version:

https://www.podbean.com/player-v2/?i=n2dxt-1ba9e62-pb&from=pb6admin&share=1&download=1&rtl=0&fonts=Arial&skin=f6f6f6&font-color=auto&logo_link=episode_page&btn-skin=c73a3a

This is the transcript:

Will the Democrats really change America? That's the question I want to ask.

We're a few days, when we're recording this, after the euphoric victory by the Democrats in the USA. They do now control the Senate. They now control the House of Representatives. They obviously do not control the President. Others do that. And the election results that they achieved were quite extraordinary, and they have good reason to celebrate.

But winning elections is not enough. The game in politics is about power, and it's about setting the agenda and changing the rules. Eventually, it's about delivery. And my question is: will the Democrats really change anything when it comes to those more important points than just winning the elections? That is the question in this video.

And let's face it, victory is not the same as change. The Republicans suffered a major defeat, but they are still in power. Voters rejected Trump's politics and his corruption. But what has he done in reaction? He has promoted Stephen Miller, and it looks like he's going to double down on his whole deeply right-wing, deeply offensive, deeply aggressive, deeply unacceptable programme inside the USA. And as a result, American politics is going to stay the same for the time being, except there is going to be conflict between Trump and the House of Representatives and the Senate.

But the American political system also remains unchanged, and that is a key point. The same powerful interests are still controlling it in the way they did before this election. The question is: can the Democrats also challenge political power, and what has driven US politics for decades, which is the corporate interest?

Now, I'm not saying the Democrats don't recognise the issues that they are facing. The politics of hope has returned, at least in the case of some newly elected Democrats. Senator-elect James Talarico, and I hope I said that right, in his victory speech in Texas,

was quite remarkable. He noted that he defeated enormous financial and political opposition. He had been up against Musk, in effect.

$300 million was spent by Musk to try to prevent him being elected. But he was nonetheless. That in itself represents an enormous challenge to the existing hierarchy of power in the USA, which has always been associated with the ability to spend.

And his victory speech challenged the power of billionaires. He said left and right are over. The split now in politics is top and bottom. He recognised that there is a group at the top who are trying to oppress everybody else, and he said quite specifically that he is representing those at the bottom.

So James Talarico is offering a politics of love. My question is, could this become a politics of care? His is faith-based. I want to make it broader, but he recognises it has to be; I'll be fair to him.

But not every Democrat is saying the same thing. And there is a problem when it comes to the delivery of this form of politics, and that is that money does still control US politics.

The 2010 Citizens United ruling passed by the Supreme Court in that year transformed US campaign finances. As a consequence, billionaires can now exert enormous electoral influence, and we're seeing that. The AI tech bros, know whose side their bread is buttered. They know they have to be there with the Republicans.

And corporate lobbying does still shape all political priorities. Many Democrats are as wedded to this system as are Republicans. It is only a minority of Democrats who are standing out from the crowd. They might be the ones we notice, but be real about this: US politicians, probably without exception, now depend on wealthy donors. And in the midst of that, ordinary people struggle to make themselves heard. We've heard the people on the stump say they're listening. Will they when they get to Washington? That is my question.

So the Democrats face a fundamental choice. They can manage the existing political system, or, and these are literally alternatives they have to decide between, they can seek to transform it. Electoral reform must challenge the power of corporate money. Gerrymandering, which has been used to undermine fair political representation, must be reversed. And democracy must serve people and not corporations. But for far too long it has served corporate interests. So much legislation in America is written for the benefit of companies and not for people. And this is the challenge that the Democrats have to face, and the party is not united over this issue.

There are the progressives, Mamdani, El-Sayed, Ocasio-Cortez. They represent the groups who want to reject corporate power. And then there are those who are called the ' corporate Democrats', and they're called that for a good reason. They are as

embedded with the large corporations in America as the Republicans are.

And the reality is that corporate power is the real problem and not just in politics. Let's go far beyond that. Monopolies are increasingly dominating American well-being and its economic life, and that is because politicians are letting them do that. Corporate profits are taking priority over public well-being, and that is seen in US healthcare. Harmful products are being created that damage people and the planet, and that is also being seen through the use of ultra-processed foods.

Lobbyists defend these interests in Washington. Neoliberalism protects this concentration of power, and it remains the culture of a great many Democrats who willingly subscribe to this and say it is the American way. But it's not working, and in the face of that challenge, good politicians are just not enough.

I have no doubt about the good faith of some of the newly elected Democrats. I'm a big fan of what they're talking about. Their commitment to public service and people appears real, but corporate interests will still seek their attention. Political institutions reward compromise with established power. So will their conviction survive what was called by a military strategist once upon a time, 'contact with the enemy'? Will the control of corporate power remain a reality, in other words?

The next two years will test the Democrats. Let's be clear about that. They are going to be particularly difficult. During that period, Trump can veto any legislation he opposes that the Democrats have put forward in either house and have approved. Democrats will face competing political demands. They will also be seeking to create a successful 2028 presidential campaign. And investigating corruption and abuses will divert them from thinking about the agenda for the future.

Immigration enforcement, tariffs and wars will also demand their attention. But structural reform of politics and broader US society must remain their priority. These issues are important, but setting the agenda for what they would do if they got the power in all three parts of the American hierarchy of executive power, the President, the Senate, and the House, in 2028 must be their priority. And they have to communicate that now by putting forward legislation, even if Trump vetoes it, which sets out their programme for change.

The USA needs a different type of politics. They're not alone, of course. Many countries need a different style of politics right now. But in the USA, this is particularly poignant because their corporate influence over elections must be curtailed if we're going to see change, and this could be at the forefront of the change elsewhere, if it's successful in the USA.

Lobbying must be made genuinely accountable. Monopoly power must be challenged. Teddy Roosevelt did this early in the 20th century. Someone else must do it now, and there is no obvious champion to take this forward at this moment now Bernie Sanders is

looking towards retirement.

And political corruption must face real consequences. The politics of care must replace neoliberalism, and that process should start in 2027 and not later, even if it’s rejected by Trump in the meantime, because that creates a clear and absolute certain difference between the Democrats and the Republicans. And that’s going to be essential come a Presidential campaign.

So the question is: do the Democrats have the courage to do this? Last week’s victories created genuine hope, but without radical reform, the Democrats could achieve very little. The Democrats must therefore promise fundamental political change. They must confront the power of money. Will the Democrats change America then, or will they merely govern it within the existing rules?

That’s what I do not know. That’s what most people in the USA do not know, but I hope they will change the country. And I think many people there will do the same because they’ve shown by turning out in the ballot box in record numbers for a midterm election that they really do not want a perpetuation of this neoliberal hierarchy of power, which Trump represented and which they no longer want.

That’s what I think. What do you think? There is a poll down below. Have a look.

Poll

[poll id="583"]