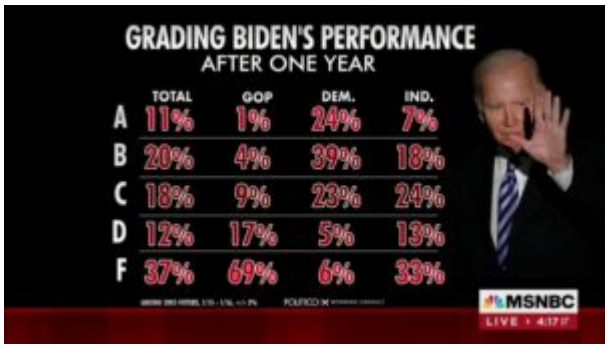
Biden and the Democrats Face Potential Disaster; Sanders Calls for a New Course

written by Dan La Botz | February 1, 2022



Poll finds that Biden gets an F – MSNBC

This article was written for L'Anticapitaliste, *the weekly newspaper of the New Anticapitalist Party (NPA) of France.*

[Jan. 26, and 2022] President Joseph Biden took office a year ago, having defeated former president Donald Trump by a vote of 51.3% to 46.9%, a difference of more than seven million votes. Biden had asked voters to join him in what he called a "battle for the soul of the nation." Those who voted for him expected him to end the COVID pandemic, to revived the economy so damaged by COVID, and to defend American democracy from the increasing authoritarianism of Trump and the Republican Party. His platform called for major economic, social, and political programs to make the country a better place for all.

Today, despite a strong start in his first few months, Biden finds himself and his party failing on every front, opening up the prospect of a Republican victory in the mid-term elections for House and Senate on November 8 this year. Biden's failure limits the possibilities of the progressives and socialists in the Democratic Party's leftwing and means that the labor and social movements will face more difficulties in the future.

Biden's presidency began auspiciously. He and the Democrats with Republican support passed the $1.9 trillion Covid-19 relief bill and the $1.2 trillion infrastructure bill. He has been able to bring joblessness down from 18 million to 2 million receiving unemployment benefits, that is, down from 9 percent on Inauguration Day to 3.9 percent now. With a massive national vaccine distribution program, COVID cases and deaths began to fall—but then came Delta and Omicron, and once again the pandemic swept the nation, filling hospitals, taking thousands of lives, and disrupting the economy.

In foreign policy, Biden began by reasserting America's role as an imperial power, repairing relations with the European allies that Trump had scorned and calling for resistance to the rising power of China. But his abrupt withdrawal from Afghanistan undermined his allies' confidence in the United States, while his handling of the Russian threats to the Ukraine have created greater friction with the European powers.

Biden's frustrations come in large part from the highly disciplined Republican Party whose members now vote en bloc against him in the Senate and the House. But they also arise from divisions within his own Democratic Party whose conservative Senators Joe Manchin and Krysten Sinema vote with

the Republicans, making it impossible to pass his social legislation, tax proposals, and voting rights legislation. Biden has been unable to pass Bill Back Better Bill containing many social programs like childcare, education, and health or to defend the voting rights legislation protecting black, Latino, young, and elderly voters. With COVID continuing, the economic recovery proceeding but unevenly, and with inflation growing at 7% a year, a forty year high, people have lost confidence in Biden. Today according to polls only 37% approve of the job he is doing while 52% disapprove.

On the left, Senator Bernie Sanders, has called for "a major course correction. "It is no great secret that the Republican party is winning more and more support from working people," said Sanders. "It's not because the Republican party has anything to say to them. It's because in too many ways the Democratic party has turned its back on the working class….It's important that we have the guts to take on the very powerful corporate interests that have an unbelievably powerful hold on the economy of this country."

Moderate Democrats, however, criticize Biden for having leaned too far left. They want a course correction too, but to the right.

What might change the country's direction, perhaps in the spring, if the pandemic ends, is a resurgence of mass labor and social movements. Progressives, socialists, and others on the left should be involved in organizing such movement when they arise in order to create an independent political force.