# Can Democratic Socialist Mamdani become Mayor of New York?

written by Dan La Botz | June 30, 2025

By Dan La Botz

The election campaign and stunning victory of Zohran Mamdani in New York City's Democratic Party mayoral primary election on June 24 is having an enormous impact on American politics. Mamdani, a 33-year-old Muslim immigrant, state representative, and a member of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), defeated Andrew Cuomo, a powerful 67-year-old politician who ran a multi-million-dollar election campaign. Cuomo had to resign from the office of governor after accusations by 13 women that he had sexually harassed them. Nevertheless, he had the backing of many major unions and financial and real estate interests. Mamdani, on the other hand, ran on a campaign platform that called for a rent freeze, for free buses, and free childcare, all to be paid for by taxing rich New Yorkers and corporations, and he criticized Israel's genocide in Gaza. His message inspired young people and brought thousands of new voters to the polls. He could win the general election on November 4.

The New York mayoral election is important deciding the future of the largest city in the country with 8.26 million inhabitants, and a metropolitan area of 22 million. It is a port of entry for immigrants and one of the most diverse cities in the country. It is the home of the New York Stock Exchange and many of the most important banks such as JPMorgan Chase, Goldman Sachs, and Morgan Stanley, making it the country's financial capital. It is the seat of the United Nations. And with its theaters, museum, galleries, and concert halls it is also the country's cultural capital. The mayor of New York has a political profile and weight comparable to a governor.

Mamdani and the DSA organized an army of 50,000 volunteers who knocked on the doors of one million New Yorkers. Progressive Senator Bernie Sanders and Congresswoman Alexandria Ocasio Cortez endorsed him. In New York, 68% of voters are Democrats and only 30% Republicans, so the winner of the Democratic primary usually wins the election. This time, the situation is more complicated.

Though Mamdani won the Democratic Party primary fair and square, the Democratic Party leaders, Senator Charles Schumer and Congressman Hakim Jefferies, both of whom are from New York, congratulated him but have declined to endorse him. They know the capitalist class in New York is horrified by Mamdani's call for higher taxes on the rich and more services for the working class and poor, and their first loyalty is to the capitalist class.

Andrew Cuomo, despite his defeat in the primary, plans to run as an independent, and he will have the backing of finance and real estate again, though some of the unions have abandoned him for Mamdani.

The sitting mayor Eric Adams, will also be a candidate. He ran for office as a Democrat on a conservative, law-and-order program and filled city positions with friends and family. When Joe Biden was president, in September 2024, the U.S. Justice Department indicted Adams on charges of bribery, conspiracy, fraud, and two counts of soliciting illegal foreign campaign donations, and he was set to go to trial. But after the election of Donald Trump, the Justice Department dismissed the charges, allegedly because of Adams' promise to let Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) free rein in the city. Adams' deal with Trump turned many Democrats against him. Like Cuomo, however, he has the backing of many in the worlds of finance and real estate. Cuomo or Adams could build a coalition of conservative Democrats and Republican voters.

The Republican candidate for mayor, Curtis Silwa, head of the Guardian Angeles, a volunteer, unarmed police organization, has been asked by some in his party to drop out to help Adams. But he says he's staying in the race.

Mamdani is a Muslim, so there's the question of the Jewish vote. Jews make up only 2.4% of the U.S. population, but they are 18% of New York City's. Mamdani is anti-Zionist, but Jewish organizations and leaders attack him as anti-Semitic. The Jewish vote was divided with many younger Jews voting for Mamdani. Republicans accuse him of being linked to 9/11, to Hamas, to terrorism.  Republican Congressman Andy Ogles, called for Mamdani's deportation.

Mamdani's campaign, platform, and victory point a possible new direction for the Democrats and for the left. But it will be hard to beat the billionaires.