

Trump Acquitted, Biden Builds Business Support for Relief

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For a second time, the U.S. Senate acquitted Donald J. Trump in a weeklong impeachment trial, this time of the accusation of “incitement to insurrection” when on January 6 armed Trump supporters broke into the U.S. Capitol to prevent the certification of Democrat Joseph Biden’s victory in the presidential election. While a majority of the Senators voted by a 57 to 43 margin to convict, because a two-thirds majority (67 votes) is required, Trump was nevertheless acquitted.

Immediately following the vote, Republican Senate leader Mitch McConnell, who himself voted for acquittal, said, “There’s no question—none—that President Trump is practically and morally responsible for provoking the events of the day.” While the U.S. Representatives who served as the prosecutors made a compelling case, the majority of Republican Senators, fearing Trump’s power, voted to acquit, claiming that the Senate did not have the power to try him because he was no longer a sitting president. McConnell and other Republicans suggest Trump could still face criminal prosecution as a private citizen.

Following the vote, Trump, who made no apology for inciting the insurrection, said, “The Make America Great Again movement has only just begun. I look forward to continuing our incredible journey in the months ahead.” So, for now, Trump remains the dominant figure in the Republican Party, which controls half the Senate, just under half the House of Representatives, and 74 million voters nationwide. More than half of all Republicans believe that Trump actually won the election and 18 percent support those who broke into the Congress. Trump, though Twitter and Facebook have closed his accounts, still commands the mass, far-right political movement that he created.

While Trump remains a major figure and his mass base a serious problem, today his party is weaker than ever. In the last election 35 percent of voters registered as independents as the Republicans shrank, and since January 6, tens of thousands more have left the party. Also, as the impeachment was taking place, 120 Republican leaders met to discuss leaving their party and forming a new

center-right conservative party. While Republican disarray benefits Democrats, Biden's party still faces COVID, economic depression, climate change, and racism.

With the trial over, Biden and the Democrats can now turn their attention to passing his \$1.9 trillion relief package to address the pandemic and the economic crisis. We now have half a million COVID deaths, twenty million unemployed, and millions hungry and facing eviction.

Already sure of backing from labor unions, Blacks, Latinos, and women, Biden has been trying to build support for his plan by forging an alliance with big business, meeting with groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, the National Association of Manufacturers, and the Business Roundtable as well as corporations like American Airlines and General Motors. Two-thirds of small businesspeople say they support Biden's plans, though many businesses large and small object to the call for a \$15 an hour minimum wage. Biden has called for higher taxes on the wealthy to pay for his plan. DSA and the left call for Congress to tax the rich and to create a single-payer health plan.

Surprisingly, the Democratic Socialists of America expressed little interest in or concern about Trump's impeachment and the need to defend democratic institutions, limited as they may be. DSA's leadership declared, "We do not believe that the mere impeachment of Trump will address these injustices [racism, sexism, immigrant rights, lack of health care]...we don't believe the impeachment process will do anything to bring working class people into the political process. Only people powered movements can do that, and we believe change is coming." Maybe so, but how? We on the left cannot ignore fights to defend democracy, even as we fight for relief, reforms and socialism.