

Progressive Caucus Reversal Shows U.S. Congress Allows No Antiwar Voice

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Global Research, November 03, 2022

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*The cynicism of "Congressional Progressive Caucus" Democrats was exposed in their humiliating retraction this week of a letter sent to **President Joe Biden** calling on him to engage in direct diplomacy with the Russian government.*

After the backlash from Congressional Democrats, including some signers of the statement, in less than 24 hours, the mild statement signed by 30 of the 101 CPC members was replaced by a more hawkish message calling for "victory" in NATO's war in Ukraine.

The Progressive Caucus are representatives from the largest urban centers, elected on promises to fight for reduced military spending and promote Medicare for All, a living wage, cancellation of student debt, a Green New Deal and an end to mass incarceration.

Their retraction clarifies, once again, that no antiwar message, even with a polite, nonthreatening voice, is permitted in the established two-party system. War funding consistently sails through Congress with almost unanimous votes. Essential social programs are symbolically proposed, then left in the dust.

The initial publicized letter from the Progressive Caucus to President Biden was no antiwar statement. The letter opened by praising Biden: "We write with appreciation for your commitment to Ukraine's legitimate struggle against Russia's war of aggression." (See [this](#))

The Progressive Caucus Democrats reaffirmed enduring support for the "military and economic support the United States has provided to Ukraine," adding, "Your administration's policy was critical to enable the Ukrainian people, through their courageous fighting and heroic sacrifices, to deal a historic military defeat to Russia . . ."

Then the Caucus politely encouraged a "proactive diplomatic push."

Even this timid suggestion of direct talks with Russia was attacked and labeled as a

“dramatic shift” in an Oct. 24 Washington Post tweet and full article. (See [this](#) and [this](#))

The Caucus stated Oct. 25: “The Congressional Progressive Caucus hereby withdraws its recent letter to the White House regarding Ukraine.”

This second statement hastens to clarify that Democrats “have strongly and unanimously supported and voted for every package of military, strategic and economic assistance to the Ukrainian people.” The Caucus claims the previous day’s statement was “released by staff without vetting.”

They want to make it especially clear that they are not “somehow aligned with Republicans, who seek to pull the plug on [U.S.] American support for President Volodymyr Zelensky and the Ukrainian forces.”

Republican Party statements raising questions on war funding are just as duplicitous as the statements of Democrats. House Minority Leader **Kevin McCarthy** hastened to clarify a day later that Republicans weren’t “planning to abandon Ukraine aid and were just calling for greater oversight of any federal dollars.” This means they want a seat at the table when billions of dollars are being distributed. (See [this](#))

Loyal to corporate profits

This is the traditional, well-scripted role played by the two-party system in U.S. politics. Both Republicans and Democrats again and again pledge their loyalty to U.S. imperialism and its relentless wars. When the White House is held by a Republican, Democrats will raise “concerns and challenges.” The roles are reversed when a Democrat is in the White House — then Republicans challenge some aspects of whatever current war is underway.

Both imperialist political parties routinely vote for the full Pentagon budget, a budget larger than the combined military budgets of the next nine largest military spenders combined. Even after the annual U.S. military budgets sail through with increases averaging 4% each year over the last five years, there are additional legislative packages providing tens of billions of dollars in supplemental military funding.

All House Democrats — including all members of the Progressive Caucus, despite years of vehement denunciations of war expenditures — voted without apology or explanation for the largest military aid package in two decades.

Members of the Progressive Caucus, which includes all members of “The Squad,” were elected based on promises to change direction and fund essential programs that are desperately needed by working people. Its members routinely criticize the bloated military budget that is the largest government program. Yet Progressive Caucus Democrats, other Democrats and Republicans cynically and routinely accept campaign donations from the largest military profiteers.

There is no mention in either CPC statement of the 30 years of NATO expansion eastward nor any reference to NATO’s efforts to militarily surround and dismember Russia. There is not even a muted criticism of the regime in Ukraine that came to power in a U.S.-backed coup with fascist support.

A regime that bans trade unions and political parties is hardly a free and independent

government. The Kiev regime is a U.S. and NATO creation that is totally dependent on the U.S. and NATO for military advisors, trainers, contractors and an endless supply of weapons.

At the same time as the packages of over \$60 billion in funding to Ukraine each passed on a day's notice, without debate or scrutiny, the promises of student loan relief were shaved, cut and legally challenged. The student loan cancellation would cost about \$24 billion per year.

None of the promised programs of these "progressives" have passed successfully, despite Democratic Party control of both Houses of Congress and the White House.

As the capitalist economy totters on the edge of total collapse, the only bailout under discussion in Congress is endless war and billions to military contractors. Even the most basic gains are blocked; U.S. imperialism is unable to make concessions to the working class in the U.S. or to any countries resisting U.S. domination.

The social democrats and the traditional liberal Democrats of the Progressive Caucus, despite their campaign promises, will betray the workers, who elected them with great hope. The only way to fight imperialist war is by strengthening the movement in the streets.

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This article was originally published on [Workers World](#).

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Featured image: Antiwar protest, the Bronx, New York City, Oct. 15. (WW Photo: Brenda Sandburg via Workers World)

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