

Socialists Spell Trouble for Democrats

They can win in deep-blue districts, but they'll weigh down the party elsewhere.

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At left: Voters walk into a polling place during the Democratic primaries in Denver, June 30.

America is politically polarized and narrowly divided. In the last presidential election, Donald Trump received 49.8% of the aggregate popular vote, while Kamala Harris got 48.3%. By that measure, it was the fourth-closest White House contest since 1888.

Now consider three New York congressional districts and two [Colorado](#) ones where self-described socialists won primaries last month, some of them with formal endorsements from the Democratic Socialists of America. Four of these districts split very differently from the nation as a whole in 2024.

In New York's Seventh, 10th and 13th districts and Colorado's First District, Mr. Trump received 19.3%, 14.1%, 11.1% and 21% respectively. Ms. Harris's victory margin in the districts ranged from 56 to 77 points.

These are indigo districts where Republicans have no chance. If Democrats win back the House in November, it won't be because of these rock-solid districts. It'll be because Democrats flip Republican seats in districts where Mr. Trump either prevailed or came close. The DSA candidates in these deep-blue districts will create problems for all Democrats, before and after November.

Before the election, they will help Republicans paint the Democratic Party as radical. One of them, Darializa Avila Chevalier in New York's 13th District, posted on X that "this country is a f— disgrace." She later bragged, "I forgot to get napkins so I just wiped my hand on the American flag behind me." The City University of New York doctoral candidate and Columbia graduate said "all cops are bastards." She's also called for "no more police

at all ever” and the abolition of prisons and immigration enforcement. Republicans will make her the face of the Democratic Party.

Ms. Chevalier and her comrades will create additional problems for their party if Democrats win the House. They’re dismissive of party leadership and certain to press their extreme views aggressively. This will further unsettle not only traditional Democrats but also swing voters, who already rate the Democratic Party less favorably than they do Mr. Trump.

The greatest peril from the Democratic Party’s DSA wing will be in districts that more closely mirror the narrowly divided nature of American politics. That’s what makes Colorado’s Eighth District interesting. Mr. Trump won it by 2 points in 2024, 50% to Ms. Harris’s 48%.

It runs from Denver’s northeast suburbs in Adams County up Interstate 25 and U.S. Highway 85 to Greeley in Weld County. It spans suburbs, farm and ranch country, and one of America’s largest gas fields.

The district is represented by Republican Gabe Evans, who served a dozen years in the Army and National Guard as a Black Hawk helicopter pilot. He was deployed to the Middle East and did search-and-rescue work and firefighting in Colorado. He was then a police officer in a Denver suburb for a decade before serving in the Colorado House. He was elected to Congress in 2024, flipping the district from the Democrats. He serves on the Homeland Security and the Energy and Commerce committees and is a member of the bipartisan Problem Solvers Caucus.

His opponent is State Rep. Manny Rutinel. He has a master’s degree from Johns Hopkins and a law degree from Yale. Like Ms. Chevalier, he holds very left-wing views. At Yale, he called animal agriculture “a horrific, exploitative industry.” He testified before a Connecticut legislative committee that “the globe must shift away from animal production.” Now he says he’s no longer a vegan and eats beef. That Weld County is home to half of Colorado’s cattle might have something to do with his change of diet.

In a Working Families Party interview last year, Mr. Rutinel endorsed “universal single payer health care,” “cancelling student debt,” shifting money “away from the military, policing and prisons . . . to fund critical social services” and “banning hydrofracking.” After beating a moderate Democrat in the primary, he’s moving to abandon some left-wing positions. He already says he now favors an “all-of-the-above energy strategy.”

He has also buried postings he made in 2013 and 2014. Only headlines remain on the internet. Among them are “What Would Jesus Do? Socialism” and “Why A More Socialistic Society Is Superior.”

Socialists running in deep-blue districts can keep saying outrageous things and win. But it's places like Colorado's Eighth District pitting the former Army helicopter pilot against the leftist Yale law graduate, that will decide which party runs the House. Game on!

Mr. Rove was senior adviser and deputy chief of staff for President George W. Bush and is author of “The Triumph of William McKinley” (Simon & Schuster, 2015).