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USA

# **Left Wins Victories in Chicago and Wisconsin as States become political battlegrounds - but Republicans expel 2 Black legislators in Tennessee**

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**The American left won two important battles earlier this month as progressive Brandon Johnson won the mayoral race in Chicago and Janet Protasiewicz was elected to the Wisconsin Supreme Court. These were victories for workers and unions, for public education and for Black people, for women and abortion rights.**

With politics polarized between left and right, political battles over the country's most important national issues—abortion, gun-control, race, and democracy—are being fought out at the local level. Democrats and progressives are winning many, but the results won't be clear until the presidential and congressional elections of 2024.

In Chicago, Johnson, a black mayoral candidate and a former teachers union organizer who called for more social services to reduce crime defeated Paul Valls, a white candidate who favored school privatization and putting more police on Chicago streets. Johnson was endorsed by the teachers union and other public employee unions—and had the support of Senator Bernie Sanders—while Vallas was backed by the police union and the conservative construction workers' unions. Brandon brought together an alliance of white progressives, union activists and Black communities to win a victory for public education and the city's people of color who constitute a majority of the population,

In Wisconsin, Protasiewicz, a supporter of abortion rights, defeated Daniel Kelly, an anti-abortion activist. Since the conservative majority on the U.S. Supreme Court ended national abortion rights protections in 2022, state fights over abortion have become the new battleground. Both sides together spent \$40 million on the election making it the most expensive judicial election in the country's history. Protasiewicz's victory assured a pro-abortion rights majority on the Supreme Court that will likely abolish an 1849 law outlawing abortion.

The centrality of the fight over abortion at the state-level could also be seen in two contradictory judicial rulings on the abortion pill mifepristone, a medication approved by the Food and Drug Administration 23 years ago and used by millions of women since then. In Texas a rightwing judge, Matthew J. Kacsmaryk, an anti-abortion and anti-gay activist, overturned FDA approval and ruled mifepristone could no longer be used in any state. But only hours later, another federal judge, Thomas Rice in Washington State, overturned that decision and said the FDA approval remained valid. With the two judges contradicting each other, the decision will now go to the U.S. Supreme Court with its anti-abortion majority.

In Tennessee, where a shooter recently killed three children and three adults in a Christian school, the state legislature refused to take any action to restrict guns. So three Democratic legislators carried out a protest in the state house against their colleagues for failure to regulate guns and protect children's lives, briefly disrupting the legislature as hundreds of parents and children protested outside. In response, the Republican majority expelled two of the representatives, Justin Jones and Justin J. Pearson, two young black men, but not Gloria Johnson, who is white. She said her colleagues declined to expel her, "maybe it was my skin color." Few such expulsions had taken place since when just after the Civil War six members were expelled. In 1980 a legislator was expelled for accepting a bribe and in 2016 for allegations of sexual misconduct.

President Biden called the expulsions "shocking" and "undemocratic," and Vice-President Kamala Harris flew to Nashville to meet with Democratic legislators. Jones and Pearson come from Nashville and Memphis, the state's two biggest cities with large black populations. County Commissioners, who have the power to fill their spots may simply reappoint the two to the seats they held.

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PS:

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