

Amy Klobuchar: The favorite Democrat of Senate Republicans

By George Gallanis
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The World Socialist Web Site is publishing a series of articles profiling the major candidates for the Democratic Party presidential nomination in the 2020 elections. WSWs writers are examining the political history and program of each candidate and making the case for a socialist alternative for the working class to both the Democrats and the Trump administration. Profiles of Elizabeth Warren, Pete Buttigieg, Kamala Harris, Beto O'Rourke and Kirsten Gillibrand have already been published.

Senator Amy Klobuchar's presidential campaign exemplifies the anti-working class and right-wing politics of the Democratic Party. Her campaign platform addresses almost none of the pressing issues confronting millions of workers and youth in the United States. She is one of a group of candidates offering themselves as "center-left" substitutes in case the campaign of former Vice President Joe Biden should fall apart.

Like a company offering multiple products to saturate the market, often made using the same ingredients in minutely different proportions, she is one of many right-wing candidates fielded by the Democratic Party who is differentiated from the rest by a slightly varied hue of alleged progressive politics.

In some ways, Klobuchar seems a candidate prepared in the laboratory to meet the specific requirements of the 2020 campaign: years of experience in the US Senate, check; background as a tough law-and-order prosecutor, check; female, check; visibly younger than Biden and Trump, check; represents a state in the Midwest, the key battleground of 2016 and likely of 2020, check. And one might add: proven defender of corporate America and US imperialism, check, check, check.

Corporate lawyer and defender of police violence

Born on May 25, 1960 in Plymouth, Minnesota, Klobuchar attended Yale University as an undergraduate. She was a member of the Yale College Democrats and the Feminist Caucus. While still an undergraduate, Klobuchar interned in the presidential campaign of Walter Mondale, former vice president and former Minnesota senator, who would go on to lose to Ronald Reagan in the 1984 presidential election.

After Yale, she attended the University of Chicago Law School, graduating in 1985 and becoming a corporate lawyer. She was a partner at the Minnesota law firms Dorsey & Whitney and Gray Plant Mooty, specializing in telecommunications law.

In 1994, Klobuchar first ran for Hennepin County Attorney in Minnesota but quit the race to support incumbent Michael Freeman. After Freeman stepped aside in 1998 to run for governor, Klobuchar ran again and won, narrowly defeating Sheryl Ramstad Hvass, making her the chief prosecutor in the largest county in Minnesota, including the city of Minneapolis, with a population of more than 1.5 million.

As county attorney, Klobuchar oversaw the systematic cover-up of police murders and violence. During her approximate tenure as county attorney, the city of Minneapolis paid out \$4.8 million in legal settlement fees for 122 police misconduct incidents. Meanwhile, during this same

period, local police and Hennepin County sheriffs killed 29 people.

Klobuchar did not once file criminal charges against police for misconduct, even when they killed people. Instead, she put such cases for decision by a grand jury, a process which was heavily criticized for its secrecy and for having the reputation of allowing testimonies in favor of police.

Tahisha Williams Brewer, whose 14-year-old son was killed by Minnesota police in 2004, wrote to Klobuchar at the time, "The grand jury is a way of hiding that the prosecutor is not giving the full information of guilt to the grand jury. I want this process out in the open, where everyone can observe it and make sure that it is fair to my son."

Minneapolis police union leaders backed her candidacy for Hennepin County Attorney in both 1998 and 2002, when the Republican Party tacitly supported her as well, failing to field a candidate to challenge her reelection.

A friend to Republicans in the US Senate

In 2006, Klobuchar won election to the United State Senate, running as a member of the Minnesota Democratic-Farmer-Labor Party, Minnesota's affiliate of the Democratic Party. As in 1998, she filled a vacancy left when a Democratic incumbent dropped out to run for governor, in this case, multi-millionaire Mark Dayton. She was reelected easily in both 2012 and 2018.

As a senator, Klobuchar has been identified as a "middle of the road" Democrat, that is, one who combined right-wing Democratic Party positions with excursions into bipartisanship, boasting of her ability to work closely with Republicans in Washington, both in the Senate itself and when the White House was in Republican hands.

This has won her a certain recognition as the 2020 Democratic presidential candidate with the most support among Republican leaders. A report on Politico.com after she announced her candidacy in February carried the headline, "Republicans gush over Klobuchar."

It began: "Amy Klobuchar has an unusual constituency behind her as she launches her run for president: Senate Republicans ... numerous Republicans are raving about Klobuchar—her personality, her respect for the other party, even her competitiveness in a general election." The article went on to observe, "a dozen GOP senators were so effusive in interviews this month that some worried they might damage her candidacy."

Conservative columnist George Will raved that Klobuchar was "the person perhaps best equipped to send the current president packing." The editorial board of the *Wall Street Journal* agreed, arguing that because Klobuchar "hasn't parroted lefty slogans ... She may be the Democrat best able to beat Mr. Trump."

Klobuchar actively promotes the anti-Russia hysteria which the Democratic Party has promulgated since the election of Trump. She once told ABC News, "You cannot compare any leaders in our country to what Vladimir Putin has done. This is a man and a regime that has taken down

a passenger plane in Ukraine, killing hundreds of people ... This is a regime that, we believe—17 intelligence agencies in our own country have said—has tried to influence our own election. I don't think there's any comparison."

She backed investigating social media websites like Facebook on the pretense they swayed the 2016 US presidential elections in favor of Trump via Russian interference, telling the *New York Times*, "We need to know if Facebook, or any entity affiliated with or hired by Facebook, ever used any of the vast financial and data resources available to them to retaliate against their critics, including elected officials who were scrutinizing them."

In June, Klobuchar blamed Russia on Twitter for online racist attacks against presidential candidate Kamala Harris. She tweeted, "These troll-fueled racist attacks on Senator @KamalaHarris are unacceptable. We are better than this (Russia is not) and stand united against this type of vile behavior." Such an accusation implying Russia was responsible was made without the slightest shred of evidence and made to intentionally confound and whip up support to her campaign among right-wing elements. Referencing her tweet, a CNN anchorman asked her if she believed Russia was behind the attacks, Klobuchar responded she had "no idea."

Klobuchar's career as a senator has received blessings from large corporations. According to *opensecrets.org*, from 2013 to 2017, her campaign and PAC committee received donations from the likes of Facebook, Target, Comcast, Best Buy, Morgan Stanley, Alphabet Inc. (the owner of Google), Amazon.com, General Motors, Ford and more.

For the same period, the top contributors to her campaign and PAC committee were: Delta Air Lines at \$85,314; her former law firm Dorsey & Whitney at \$65,435; and Walt Disney Co. at \$64,081.

A banal, right-wing presidential campaign

Klobuchar announced her candidacy for president in February 2019. In words presumably prepared in advance, she declared, "On a cold February day in Minneapolis on the mighty Mississippi River, with thousands of friends and supporters at my side I announced that I'm running for President of the United States. As I said that day in our nation's heartland, we must heal the heart of our democracy and renew our commitment to the common good."

Such forgettable words express the overall banality of her presidential campaign. A reading of her presidential campaign website says almost nothing significant. The cut and pasted stances fail to address the growing problems and struggles of workers in the United States.

But of what little is said, along with her history as senator, should be taken as a warning. For Klobuchar, the "common good" amounts to her nationalistic, pro-war agenda. Just two lines are devoted to the subject of foreign politics on her campaign website, one of which states Klobuchar "would invest in diplomacy and rebuild the State Department and modernize our military to stay one step ahead of China and Russia, including with serious investments in cybersecurity."

But this says plenty. Klobuchar's call to "modernize" a military whose budget already exceeds the next eight countries combined, would mean further attacks on the working class by way of slashing support programs to funnel more money into the military. To stay "one step ahead of China and Russia," both nuclear-armed countries, implies Klobuchar fully supports the continued amassing and building of nuclear weapons.

Klobuchar's voting record for military budgets is a consistent yes. She repeatedly voted in favor of continued funding for both wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. In 2011, she supported the bloody intervention in Libya which left the country in ruins. This year, she supported the attempted coup in Venezuela by the Trump administration.

Recently, she voted against the new federal fiscal budget beginning October 1 that includes a record \$738 billion for the military. The

hawkish Klobuchar has not been reformed. Her "no" vote was made knowing full well the budget would pass regardless. It was a cynical attempt to distance herself from the militaristic policies of the Trump administration.

Klobuchar espouses the nationalistic politics of the Democratic Party and has fervently attacked China in an attempt to blame Chinese workers for the deepening impoverishment affecting American workers. In a 2017 letter to Trump, Klobuchar stated, "You have consistently reaffirmed your commitment to supporting steelworker jobs, and Chinese steel dumping is a major contributor to American manufacturing job loss."

On domestic issues, Klobuchar has been careful to present herself as a "moderate," opposed to the supposed extremes represented by Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren—who themselves are limited entirely to the framework of the capitalist profit system.

As a *Washington Post* report in May put it, "The senator has been willing to say no to some of the purity tests being pushed by far-left activists. Klobuchar has expressed skepticism of packing the Supreme Court, for example, and she has said that some of her rivals who are promising free university tuition and college-debt forgiveness are not being straight with voters. On health care, Klobuchar endorses a public option but stops short of Medicare-for-all."

On immigration, her campaign website states, "Amy supports a comprehensive immigration reform bill that includes the DREAM Act, border security and an accountable pathway to earned citizenship." In other words, she supports the anti-immigrant politics of the Democratic Party and that of Trump, who continues the policies of previous Democratic President Barack Obama. Speaking for the Democratic party, she previously stated she "tried to negotiate with [Trump on immigration], but he won't take yes for an answer." She has not called for abolishing the fascistic Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), but has instead called for its reform.

With this generic right-wing profile, and her bland campaign, it is not a surprise that Klobuchar is running ninth or tenth in the polls and other measures of support for the Democratic presidential nomination. She participated in the first two debates without notable impact, and has met the slightly higher requirements to qualify for the third debate next month in Houston.

Minnesota is the state which supplied much of the leadership of the Democratic Party in the second half of the 20th century, including three senators who were major presidential candidates, two of them becoming vice president—Hubert Humphrey and Walter Mondale—and the third playing a key role in ousting a sitting president—Eugene McCarthy.

Humphrey, McCarthy and Mondale all represented the Democratic Party during the period when it was still associated with a program of limited social reform and improved living standards for working people, although Mondale, as vice president under Jimmy Carter, was part of a Democratic administration that broke with that tradition, inaugurating the steady shift to the right by the Democrats over the next four decades.

Some 35 years after Mondale went down to a landslide defeat to Republican Ronald Reagan, the current Minnesotan seeking the Democratic presidential nomination, Amy Klobuchar, is closer politically to Reagan than to the liberal politics of the Minnesota Democratic Party in its heyday.

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