



Michigan Democrats go full radical with Abdul El-Sayed

Abdul El-Sayed survived a multimillion-dollar Democrat civil war Wednesday, narrowly defeating Rep. Haley Stevens in Michigan's record-breaking Senate primary and handing the party's radical left its biggest victory of the midterm cycle.

The Associated Press and other outlets [called](#) the race shortly before 10 a.m. ET. With 99% of the expected vote counted, El-Sayed led Stevens by fewer than 15,000 votes out of more than 1.5 million cast.

It was a far tighter finish than almost anyone expected. Polls released in the final days of the campaign showed El-Sayed leading by double digits, but Stevens nearly pulled off an upset despite being outspent, outorganized and eventually overwhelmed by the Democrats' increasingly powerful progressive machine.

More than \$80 million poured into the contest, making it the most expensive Democrat Senate primary in U.S. history, according to AdImpact.

El-Sayed now advances to face Republican Mike Rogers in November in a race that could decide control of the Senate. Democrats need to gain four seats to reclaim the majority, and party leaders have openly acknowledged that their path becomes nearly impossible if they lose Michigan.

They will now try to hold one of the country's most important battlegrounds with a nominee who has called for government-run health care, abolishing Immigration and Customs Enforcement, raising taxes and ending U.S. aid to Israel.

That may excite the activist left. It is a much harder sell in a state President Trump carried in both 2016 and 2024.

El-Sayed's victory also completed an unlikely political comeback. The former Wayne County health director was crushed by Gov. Gretchen Whitmer in Michigan's 2018 Democrat gubernatorial primary. Eight years later, he returned to defeat nearly the entire Michigan Democrat establishment and capture one of the party's most valuable Senate nominations.

He would become the first Muslim elected to the U.S. Senate if he defeats Rogers. During El-Sayed's election-night gathering at Detroit's Majestic Theatre, supporters were seen performing Islamic prayers.

Rogers predicted before the race was called that the bruising primary would leave the eventual Democrat nominee with a divided coalition and little time to repair it.

"Whoever comes out of it is going to have a coalition problem," Rogers told the New York Post.

"Remember, voting starts in about five or six weeks. We're in an election cycle now."

"We've been building toward that day," he added. "They've been fighting each other and moving further and further to the left."

The primary became increasingly bitter as Election Day approached.

El-Sayed suggested Stevens could not "string together two coherent sentences" and portrayed her as a tool of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee. AIPAC's super PAC spent nearly \$30 million supporting Stevens, turning Israel and outside spending into defining issues in the closing stretch.

Stevens, meanwhile, became a viral spectacle after videos showed her speaking in an exaggerated Midwestern accent and repeatedly declaring, “Stick it to ’em.”

She tried to dismiss the idea that the contest represented a national fight for control of the Democrat Party.

“It’s a Michigan moment for me,” Stevens insisted.

The names behind each campaign told a different story.

Senate Minority Leader Chuck Schumer, Whitmer and retiring Sen. Gary Peters lined up behind Stevens. El-Sayed drew support from Sens. Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren, Rep. Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez and prominent left-wing streamer Hasan Piker, who traveled to Michigan during the campaign’s closing days.

The establishment spent heavily. The socialist-aligned wing walked away with the nomination.

El-Sayed was also part of a broader progressive surge Tuesday. Rep. Rashida Tlaib, state Rep. Donavan McKinney and Sanders-backed William Lawrence all defeated more moderate opponents.

But El-Sayed was the movement’s biggest prize.

Progressive candidates have routinely won in deep-blue districts where November is little more than a formality. Michigan is not one of them. It is a genuine swing state where statewide elections are often decided by a fraction of a percentage point, and Democrats have now nominated one of their most aggressive ideological candidates for one of the most consequential races in the country.

El-Sayed has tried to turn concerns about his electability into an argument about prejudice.

“When they say I’m not electable, they’re not talking about me,” he told supporters in Grand Rapids.

“They’re saying that you couldn’t possibly be open-minded enough ... to elect somebody with a name like mine who prays like I do in a state like ours.”

That may rally his base, but Rogers does not need to make the race about El-Sayed’s name or religion. El-Sayed’s own positions give Republicans plenty to work with.

Abolishing ICE, expanding government control over health care, raising taxes and cutting off support for Israel are no longer abstract positions buried in an old campaign platform. They now belong to the Democrat nominee in a state that could determine who controls the U.S. Senate.

El-Sayed defeated the Democrat establishment by convincing primary voters that the party had not moved far enough left.

Now he has to convince Michigan.