



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on February 28, 2023

Socialist Takeover of Nevada Democrat Party Hasn't Gone as Expected

The inmates have nearly two years of running the insane asylum. The result hasn't been quite the revolution they expected.

In March of 2021, *The New American* reported on the [hostile takeover](#) of the Nevada Democratic Party by the state's Democratic Socialists of America faction, many of whom are Bernie Sanders acolytes and supporters.

In doing so, they made the impressive achievement of defeating the powerful political machine of former U.S. Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid.



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But many progressives are dissatisfied with the performance of DSA's leadership — including Sanders himself.

Judith Whitmer, the party chair who was part of the socialist insurgency, now has to deal with a challenge in her reelection campaign even as those who used to support her accuse her of having betrayed DSA's progressive principles.

"The senator [Sanders] is pretty disappointed in Judith's chairmanship, specifically around her failure to build a strong grassroots movement in the state. A lot of us feel sad about what could have been. It was a big opportunity for Bernie-aligned folks in the state to prove some of the folks in the establishment wrong. And that hasn't happened," a source close to Bernie Sanders told [Politico](#).

Speaking to Politico, Whitmer replied with a level of disbelief, saying, "I think he would have said to me, 'Hey Judith, I'm disappointed in what you're doing' if that was actually a true statement."

Peter Koltak, a Democratic strategist and former Nevada senior adviser to Sanders in 2020, suggested that many progressives are now unsure if there is even value in winning control of a state's party machinery.

"There just has been a complete lack of competence or ability to accomplish anything significant.... Look, there's a lot of well-meaning activists involved there, but they don't understand the ins and outs of how you build modern campaigns," Koltak told [Politico](#).

Whitmer passed blame onto her predecessors.

"The previous administration pretty much burnt the house down," she said. "When we got the keys, there was a lot of reorganization that had to be done. Records were missing and money had been transferred out."

After Whitmer and her allies won, but before they took over, establishment party officials moved hundreds of thousands of dollars from the party treasury over to the Democratic Senatorial Campaign Committee and then quit their positions.



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Moreover, the Reid machine established its own 2022 campaign operation in the state's second-largest county, arguing it was a necessary move because Whitmer lacked experience in winning battleground state elections.

Nevertheless, Whitmer's establishment and progressive detractors say the blame rightly falls on her shoulders, citing the chairwoman's allegedly incompetent fundraising abilities, failure to build a grassroots organizing infrastructure, and poor relationship with elected officials.

Politico notes of Whitmer's ordeal:

[Whitmer's critics have] bashed her over the state party's decision to back a sheriff who appeared to support chokeholds as well as a lieutenant governor candidate, Debra March, who primaryed the sitting Democratic lieutenant governor, who had been appointed by then-Gov. Steve Sisolak. They also accused her of trying to rig the March 4 election for state party chair by removing members from the state central committee, which chooses the chair.

... The state's Democratic senators, House members and other statewide officials have endorsed Whitmer's opponent, Assemblywoman Daniele Monroe-Moreno, who is challenging her for the state chair post.

But it's not just establishment types who have gripes. Kara Hall, a leader in the Las Vegas chapter of the Democratic Socialists of America, said Whitmer also hasn't kept up relationships on the left. "She never once after she was elected spoke out and talked to the chapter," Hall said.

Even the Las Vegas DSA, which was instrumental to Whitmer's triumph two years ago, released a statement in February declaring, in vehement terms, that it is not backing her reelection.

In the eyes of Las Vegas DSA, the problem lies in trying to work within the confines of the Democratic Party, arguing it is a futile endeavor for real progressives.

"This is our lesson, and we hope socialists everywhere will pay close attention: the Democratic Party is a dead end," Las Vegas DSA's statement reads. "It is a 'party' in name only; truly, it is simply a tangled web of dark money and mega-donors, cynical consultants, and lapdog politicians."

Whitmer further defended her tenure, telling [Politico](#) that she increased small-dollar donations, improved party infrastructure in rural areas, and pioneered the use of legislative roundtables.

"They really did not want to do electoral politics," Whitmer said of her fellow progressives who have now become her critics. "They wanted to work outside of the current electoral system. As the state party chair, I can't do that. I can't work outside of the system itself. I represent the Democratic Party. I don't represent the DSA."

Kara Hall, leader of the Las Vegas DSA, gave her opinion that the problem goes beyond Whitmer; that the establishment will not allow outsiders to govern it and will simply find a way to shift its money and resources outside the formal party structure when insurgents win control, as Whitmer did.

"It has more to do with how the establishment reacted," said Hall. "We did it the right way. We took seats on the [state central committee]. We got elected. We voted. We out-organized them. And then they just set up shop somewhere else. What I think about it is they'll always do that."



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