

Sanders wins New Hampshire Democratic primary

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Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders won the New Hampshire Democratic primary decisively on Tuesday, defeating former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and posting the largest vote and the widest margin of victory ever recorded in the state that traditionally holds the first US presidential primary.

Sanders, who calls himself a “democratic socialist,” defeated Clinton by a margin of 60 percent to 39 percent, outperforming most pre-election polls. He won an across-the-board victory, powered by enormous margins among young voters (85 percent of those 30 and under) and working-class voters (65 percent among those earning less than \$50,000 a year and 67 percent among those without a college education).

Clinton won the 2008 New Hampshire primary in an upset over Barack Obama, receiving 112,404 votes to Obama’s 104,815. Sanders topped both those totals with 70 percent of the ballots counted, and is projected to reach 140,000. One election analyst noted that Sanders improved on Obama’s showing across-the-board, but particularly in working-class towns like Berlin, which Clinton won in 2008 but lost by a double-digit margin in 2016.

The Clinton campaign was in deep crisis even before voting began on Tuesday, with opinion polls predicting a sizeable loss after the unexpected near-tie in the first contest of the Democratic presidential campaign, the February 1 Iowa caucuses. This was reflected in the intervention of former President Bill Clinton, who made a series of angry and disjointed attacks on Sanders over the weekend.

The Clinton campaign sought to evoke a response among women voters on the basis of Clinton’s status as potentially the first female US president. It brought forward several prominent female supporters of Clinton, including former Secretary of State Madeline

Albright and Gloria Steinem, founder of the National Organization for Women, to play the gender card.

This proved to be entirely unsuccessful. Women voters as well as men gave a sizeable majority to Sanders. The only demographic groups where Clinton prevailed were voters over 65 years of age and those with incomes over \$200,000 a year.

The upsurge of support for Sanders, as the *World Socialist Web Site* has explained, is a delayed political reaction to the 2008 financial crash and the economic slump that followed, which continue to have a devastating impact on the jobs and living standards of the American working class.

According to exit polls, the overwhelming concerns of Democratic primary voters were economic inequality, jobs and health care, and these class issues entirely predominated over the issues of gender and racial identity that the Clinton campaign sought to raise in the final week of the campaign.

These same issues played a key role in the Republican primary as well, albeit in a right-wing populist form, with the victory of billionaire Donald Trump, who won 34 percent, more than double the vote for the second-place finisher, Ohio Governor John Kasich.

Three other candidates—Texas Senator Ted Cruz, former Florida Governor Jeb Bush, and Florida Senator Marco Rubio—placed third through fifth, with 11 percent of the vote, while New Jersey Governor Chris Christie trailed with 8 percent and was expected to end his campaign.

The Trump campaign represents the mobilization of a criminal element in the American elite, based on national chauvinism, militarism and the glorification of authoritarian rule. His thuggish persona and racist attacks on Muslims, Mexicans and others express

openly a grotesque coarsening of politics, even by the degraded standards that prevail in the United States. Trump's attacks on Muslims, in particular, have evoked a response of a fascistic character. Exit polls in New Hampshire found that 66 percent of those participating in the Republican primary supported Trump's call for an outright ban on Muslims entering the United States.

The first stage in the election campaign demonstrates the extreme polarization of social and political life in the United States, with large sections of the working class and youth moving to the left, destabilizing the entire political system and both corporate-controlled political parties. The American ruling elite is seeking to control and disrupt this leftward movement with populist demagoguery of both a "left" (Sanders) and overtly right-wing character.

Media commentators were clearly shaken by the scale of the Sanders victory and the repudiation of the political establishment in both parties. At one point during NBC's coverage of the primary results, Chris Matthews flatly declared Sanders the new frontrunner for the Democratic nomination. Andrea Mitchell (wife of former Federal Reserve Chairman Alan Greenspan) said in wonder that voters were "rejecting American capitalism."

What frightens the millionaire pundits is not the politics of Sanders himself, long a fixture in the Democratic Party congressional establishment, despite his nominal independence, but rather the radicalization of the American people, particularly the younger generation, revealed in the growing support for his campaign. A *Boston Globe* poll of Democratic primary voters released Saturday found that more than half of those aged 17 to 34 described themselves as "socialist," as well as 31 percent of all ages.

In this unfolding political crisis, the Sanders campaign is the most important political instrument of the ruling class. It is striking how conscious the Vermont senator is of the role he seeks to play in safeguarding the Democratic Party and the political monopoly of the two-party system. This was expressed in his victory speech Tuesday night, which differed from his speech the week before in Iowa, after the near-tie with Clinton, in two critical respects.

First, he went out of his way to emphasize the necessity for unity in the Democratic Party, tacitly

warning the Clinton campaign not to go too far in its attacks on him, while pledging his unconditional support for the winner of the contest for the Democratic presidential nomination. The campaign needed to remain "issue-oriented," he said, a clear reference to Bill Clinton's attacks on him, because "we will need to come together in a few months because the right-wing Republicans that we oppose must not be allowed to gain the presidency."

Second, after repeating the main points of his indictment of Wall Street domination of the US economy and political system and his proposals for higher taxes on the wealthy, he turned to foreign policy, pledging to destroy the Islamic State in Iraq and Syria and "keep this country safe." He thus sought to reassure both Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus that a Sanders presidency would uphold the global interests of American imperialism.



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