

Sanders under pressure to quit from Democratic leaders, media

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In the wake of five losses in five contests Tuesday, Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders is coming under mounting pressure from Democratic Party leaders and the media to abandon his presidential campaign and concede the Democratic nomination to former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton.

Remarks by President Obama to Democratic Party donors at a fundraiser March 11 in Austin, Texas were leaked to the *New York Times* Thursday and confirmed by the White House. Obama called on Democrats to begin uniting behind the party's prospective nominee, assumed to be Clinton.

The *Times* headline went even further than the actual content of Obama's words: "Obama Privately Tells Donors That Time Is Coming to Unite Behind Hillary Clinton." As quoted, however, Obama was careful not to name any names, so that White House spokesman Josh Earnest could confirm that Obama had discussed the presidential race with Democratic donors, while disavowing any explicit preference for Clinton.

The *Times* reported, "In unusually candid remarks, President Obama privately told a group of Democratic donors last Friday that Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont was nearing the point at which his campaign against Hillary Clinton would end, and that the party must soon come together to back her."

The newspaper continued, "Mr. Obama chose his words carefully, and did not explicitly call on Mr. Sanders to quit the race, according to those in the room. Still, those in attendance said in interviews that they took his comments as a signal to Mr. Sanders that perpetuating his campaign, which is now an uphill climb, could only help the Republicans recapture the White House."

This report touched off a flurry of commentaries along the same lines, citing either Obama or unnamed high-level Democratic Party officials. Typical headlines included:

- *Slate* magazine: "President Obama Gives Bernie

Sanders a Subtle Push Toward the Exit"

- *The Hill*: "Obama privately urges Dems to rally around Clinton"

- *US News & World Report*: "Sanders Resists Pressure to Quit After Primary Losses"

- Fox News: "Sanders fights for life as Clinton wins another state, Obama turns screws"

Obama did not endorse Clinton overtly or name Sanders as the candidate who should step back in favor of the frontrunner, but the implication was clear, especially given the timing of the remarks—delivered before the March 15 Clinton primary sweep, but not made public until two days after the vote.

As *Slate* magazine commented: "Hillary Clinton's five-for-five sweep of this past Tuesday's Democratic primaries turned her into her party's presumptive nominee. President Obama, though, appears to have come to that conclusion even before voting began during the Super Tuesday sequel, via the *New York Times*."

Obama voted by absentee ballot in the Illinois primary, won narrowly by Clinton. The White House has refused to comment on which candidate he voted for, but his support for his former Secretary of State has been an open secret since last October, when Vice President Joe Biden decided not to enter the race.

The Clinton campaign has been more cautious than the White House in pushing for an early end to the primary race. In part this is the unavoidable result of Clinton's own history: in her unsuccessful contest with Obama in 2008, she consistently rejected suggestions that she could not overtake Obama's early lead in delegates, and she remained in the race to the very last primary and caucus.

Clinton campaign manager Robby Mook even conceded, in a memo released to the press Wednesday, that upcoming contests in a series of less populous states, mostly in the West, would likely favor Sanders. But he argued Clinton's lead was insurmountable, and that "a

string of victories by Sen. Sanders over the next few weeks would have little impact on Sec. Clinton's position in the race."

The upcoming contests include Arizona, Utah and Idaho March 22 and Alaska, Hawaii and Washington March 26, then a ten-day break around Easter, followed by Wisconsin April 5 and Wyoming April 9. All but Arizona and Wisconsin are caucus states, where the Sanders campaign has usually had the advantage.

The drumbeat from the Democratic Party establishment and the media amounts to a demand that Sanders carry out his assigned role in the presidential election: convincing his supporters, particularly among young people, to back Clinton in the general election, despite the widespread lack of enthusiasm, and in many cases open hostility, towards her right-wing record as a defender of Wall Street and advocate of American militarism, including the Iraq War.

Sanders' spokesmen complained that the nomination campaign was only halfway completed, that there was still time for him to overtake Clinton's lead of more than 300 convention delegates, and that millions more people should be given the opportunity to have a choice for the Democratic nomination.

But more significantly, Sanders emphasized that his campaign, win or lose, was good for the Democratic Party. "People want to become engaged in the political process by having vigorous primary and caucus process," he said. "I think we open up the possibility of having a large voter turnout in November. That is exactly what we need."

This statement demonstrates that Sanders is fully conscious of the role he plays in American politics, using "socialist" rhetoric and occasional calls for "political revolution" to attract youth and working people, only to trap them within the confines of the Democratic Party and insure that there is no political challenge to the corporate-controlled two-party system.



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