

Bernie Sanders campaigns in San Diego, California

Our reporters
23 May 2016

Democratic presidential candidate Bernie Sanders stopped in San Diego, California, for a two-day campaign swing, including a rally Saturday night in National City, near the US-Mexico border, where the Vermont senator addressed a crowd of some 10,000 at Kimball Park. Thousands arrived hours before the event.

California is the most populous and important of the six states where primaries or caucuses will be held June 7, along with New Jersey, Montana, New Mexico and North and South Dakota. The state accounts for 475 pledged delegates, in a race where former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton leads among pledged delegates by about 280.

Clinton also benefits from the role of more than 700 unelected “superdelegates,” the vast majority of whom have pledged to support her at the Philadelphia convention in July. By most media tallies, counting superdelegates, Clinton is less than 100 votes short of the 2,383 required for nomination, a figure she is expected to reach easily on June 7.

Coming off a win in Oregon and a narrow loss in Kentucky, Sanders trails Clinton in opinion polls in California, by margins ranging from 8 to 19 percentage points. He needs to win the state by 30 points to win sufficient delegates to forestall Clinton’s clinching the nomination.

At the San Diego rally, comedian George Lopez and actress Shailene Woodley endorsed Sanders and sought to lend their popular appeal to his campaign. Sanders repeated in his speech his attacks on wealth inequality, calls for raising the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, and denunciations of corporations profiting while millions live in poverty. These remarks clearly resounded with his audience.

At the same time, at a rally on the US-Mexico border,

he continued to promote the nationalist politics used by trade unions to divide the working class and bolster American imperialism, declaring, “We need to eliminate the trade policy that allows corporations to move. If you want us to buy your products make them here, not in China.” WSWS reporters heard one audience member say to another, “That would take jobs away from those in Mexico.”

Sanders made a special mention of Flint and Detroit, Michigan, “How do we have trillions for a war in Iraq but no money for inner cities? We are not going to invest in Afghanistan; we are going to invest in America.” Sanders did not tell his audience that he voted for the National Defense Authorization Act that funded the war in Iraq. *World Socialist Web Site* reporters spoke to many rally attendees about the political issues surrounding the US presidential election and the growing danger of war.

Ira and Elizabeth Garcia came to the rally to hear Bernie Sanders speak in person. “He is giving people opportunities,” said Ira, “Not like [Donald] Trump who is using racist language against Mexicans, Muslims, and other minorities.” They also expressed skepticism of Democratic frontrunner, Hillary Clinton, whom they consider untrustworthy. “She is a liar,” Ira explained, bringing up her shifting positions on issues and her character.

When asked about Sanders’ support for continuing military operations in the Middle East, Ira agreed that was his policy but wished it were not so. “We should not be there,” he said, referring to the US military presence in Afghanistan and Iraq, “All the presidential candidates are dedicated to war, but I wish that were not so.”

Ray is a young worker who came to the event because a friend invited him. He supports Sanders

because he believes he is the most authentic candidate. “Bernie has been consistent in his support for issues like gay marriage while Hillary has not,” he said, adding that he was also suspicious of Hillary for the FBI investigations into her.

As for many of those in attendance, social inequality and the deteriorating conditions of the working class are a top priority. “I go to school full time and work two jobs,” Ray said. “I only get a few hours of sleep each night.” He said he was looking for a politician who will support his needs and not those of the rich.

Jasmine told the WSWs she does not believe that the United States is a functioning democracy anymore. “It seems like it is [a democracy], but it isn’t. The rich have too much power in government.” She also expressed disgust for the continued bombing of other countries around the world. “Americans do not vote for war,” Jasmine explained. “It is the people at the top who support war.”

Emily, a volunteer for the event, also agreed to an interview for the WSWs. This was her second time watching Sanders speak in San Diego. She said she supports Sanders’ democratic socialist ideals. “I think we need a socialist in the office right now,” she exclaimed. She agreed when WSWs reporters explained that socialism means an economic system run by and for the working class.

Nathan, another Sanders supporter, told our reporters, “One of the issues that attracts me to Sanders is his advocacy for better education and removing the student debt crisis and bringing us up to standard with the rest of the world and also his policies on universal health care are really big as well.”

When WSWs reporters brought up Sanders’ support for Obama’s wars, Nathan replied, “You know that’s actually a really great point and that the question war seems to be something that we very easily forget about. That’s the reason I wouldn’t vote for Clinton, but the question of war is not something that immediately comes to mind when I think of Sanders for some reason.”

Nathan disagreed with our criticism of Sanders’ position on war but did concede that “For the leftest of the candidates to not even be talking about it is kind of insane and I don’t think continual warfare makes any sense. We don’t need to continue to run a deficit just to basically run another country out of business.”

The WSWs also spoke to another young woman, Emily, who said she “became a Sanders supporter because he is the only one talking about inequality; he is the only one who seems to be interested in working people.”

On Obama’s political record she said, “Obama was a total disappointment to me and to the rest of the Latino community. He promised immigration reform but basically ended up doing the exact opposite; he has made things so much worse and broken up so many families. We are ready for someone who is not controlled by corporations or other pressures and I think Sanders is that.”

She added, “I won’t vote for Clinton if Bernie doesn’t get the nomination. I just can’t. It is impossible to tell her opinion. She has been on every side of every issue. She is clearly not on our side.”

When the question of war was brought up Emily responded, “No one wants to go to war, including the people we are at war with. I mean the *real* people, not the governments.”

The WSWs also asked Emily what she thought of socialism, to which she said, “Yes, I consider myself a socialist. Absolutely. Bring it on. It [socialism] means using our money for good things and not on blowing up other people in countries halfway around the world. It means government for regular people, not billionaires.”



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