

# Sanders backs ouster of Democratic Party chair

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24 May 2016

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders said Sunday he was backing the primary opponent of Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida, chairwoman of the Democratic National Committee (DNC), and that he would remove her from her Democratic Party leadership position if he won the Democratic nomination and was elected president.

Sanders reiterated this stance during several appearances on Sunday morning television interview programs, bringing his conflict with the Democratic Party leadership to a new level. The Sanders campaign has repeatedly criticized Schultz, a longtime political ally of Hillary Clinton, for manipulating party rules and procedures to favor the Clinton campaign.

Schultz limited the number of presidential debates and scheduled many of them for Saturday evenings, when they were sure to draw the smallest audience, in order to minimize the chances of any lesser-known Democratic rival gaining ground on the former first lady, senator and secretary of state. Despite her formal neutrality in the race, Schultz was known to be backing Clinton, having played a prominent role in her 2008 contest against Barack Obama.

Sanders previously complained of Schultz's brazen favoritism, particularly at the time of a conflict last fall when the Sanders campaign was shut off from access to Democratic Party data for several days after a Sanders staffer improperly accessed Clinton campaign records during a software malfunction at the Democratic National Committee. Tensions flared up again earlier this month when Schultz selected a heavily pro-Clinton slate as the DNC's nominees for the committees that will handle credentials, rules and the platform at the Democratic convention in Philadelphia.

But on Sunday, in an appearance on CNN's "State of the Union" program, Sanders went further, telling

interviewer Jake Tapper he was supporting Tim Canova, a law professor who is challenging Schultz for the Democratic nomination in her South Florida congressional district. Canova has publicly backed Sanders against Clinton and has echoed the Vermont senator's political attacks on Wall Street influence, but the Sanders campaign had refused until now to embrace him as a challenger to an incumbent Democratic representative. The primary will take place August 30.

In another appearance, on the CBS program "Face the Nation," Sanders made a more sweeping critique of Schultz as a DNC chair who personified the role of big money in the Democratic Party. "Do I think she's the kind of chair that Democratic Party needs? No, I don't," he said. "Frankly, what the Democratic Party is about is people running around to rich people's homes and raising obscene sums of money from wealthy people."

Sanders continued his political doubletalk about the class nature of the Democratic Party, claiming that a party controlled lock, stock and barrel by corporate interests can be transformed into "a vital party of working class people."

At campaign events throughout California, the main battleground for the June 7 primaries and caucuses in six states, Sanders has begun to downplay his attacks on Hillary Clinton, tacitly conceding that she is likely to become the Democratic nominee and that he will support her 100 percent in that event.

As a news roundup of campaign appearances published in the *Los Angeles Times* noted, in San Diego, Sanders "gave her a pass on most of the criticism he's regularly leveled about her \$225,000 speeches to Wall Street." Later, in Vista, "he made a one-paragraph reference to her choice to allow super PACs to raise money for her benefit, and that she'd

received donations from Wall Street employees. But that too was less biting than what Sanders has said in the past.”

At Irvine, “When he raised the issue of the minimum wage, he did not mention Clinton’s opposition to the \$15-an-hour national rate that he supports. Similarly, when he mentioned the Iraq war, he did not cite Clinton’s vote for it, as he has throughout the campaign. And when he stated his objections to trade agreements, he did not mention Clinton’s past support for some deals. His discussion of new criminal justice measures left aside his earlier mentions of the 1994 crime bill supported by both Clintons.”

In his appearance on CNN Sunday, Sanders appeared to be laying the ground for an eventual concession speech aimed at convincing his own supporters that Clinton was a legitimate victor in the nomination fight. While criticizing the role of superdelegates, the officeholders and party officials who vote at the convention without having to win a delegate slot in a primary or caucus, he said, in response to a direct question, that the candidate with a majority of pledged delegates at the end of the primaries should be the nominee. “This is what I believe,” he said.

Clinton currently leads by nearly 300 pledged delegates, and Sanders would need to win nearly 70 percent of the delegates on June 7 to overtake her. “I understand that it is a very, very uphill fight to go from 46 percent, where we are today, to 50 percent in the nine remaining contests,” he said. “I got that. But... we’re going to try. California obviously is the big race that remains.”

The California contest is attracting unprecedented numbers of new voters, according to press reports citing official registration figures. More than twice as many residents have registered this year than in the similar four-month period in 2012, and they were overwhelmingly young and registering as Democrats, an indication they were turning out for Sanders and not the presumptive Republican nominee Donald Trump.

Nearly 200,000 people registered to vote in California through Facebook on May 16-17 alone, after the company put a voter registration button on its newsfeeds, linking directly to the state online registration system. According to press reports, the registration surge is motivated partly by support for Sanders and partly by hostility to Trump. Only 16.7

percent of new registrants chose the Republican Party, down from 27 percent of current registered voters. Two-thirds were under 35, and nearly one-third were Latino.

Two major polls, released Sunday, suggested that a general election contest between Clinton and Trump could be extremely close. An NBC News/*Wall Street Journal* poll found Clinton leading Trump by 46-43 percent, while a *Washington Post*/ABC poll put Trump slightly ahead, 46-44 percent. Both leads were within the margin of error.

The polling organizations cautioned that these numbers reflected a consolidation of Republican Party support behind Trump, while Democratic Party voters remain divided between Clinton and Sanders. More significant than the Clinton-Trump horse race were the figures showing that both frontrunners are viewed unfavorably by the majority of those polled: 58 percent viewing Trump unfavorably in the ABC poll, with 54 percent opposing Clinton. About 20 percent viewed both candidates unfavorably.

While large numbers view the likely Democratic and Republican candidates with distaste, nearly 50 percent said they would seriously consider a third party candidate, and 10 percent said they were likely to vote for one. The figure wanting a third party option stood at 44 percent in the ABC poll and 47 percent in the NBC poll, one of the most sizeable displays of opposition to the long-entrenched, corporate-controlled two-party system. A survey a week earlier by the Republican-aligned Data Targeting firm found that 55 percent of all voters and 91 percent of young voters wanted a third party alternative in the 2016 elections.



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