

Clinton steps up right-wing appeal to Republicans and billionaires

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The campaign of Democratic presidential candidate Hillary Clinton has taken a further turn to the right, with open appeals to Republican Party loyalists to break with their nominee Donald Trump on the grounds that he is disrespectful of the military and opposed to confronting Russia and other countries targeted by Washington for attack.

Three incumbent Republican congressmen, other prominent Republican officials and ex-officials, and numerous Republican fundraisers have announced their support for Clinton, or at least their opposition to Trump.

Tuesday's endorsement of Clinton by Representative Richard Hanna, an upstate New York Republican, was followed by statements Wednesday from Representative Adam Kinzinger, whose district is in the Chicago suburbs; Representative Charlie Dent of Pennsylvania; and former Montana Governor Marc Racicot, an ex-chairman of the Republican National Committee. These three declared they could not support Trump, while stopping short of saying they would vote for Clinton.

A bipartisan group of 37 foreign policy and national security officials, including several former military officers, issued an open letter Thursday condemning Trump's comments downgrading the significance of the NATO alliance. The letter declared:

"Trump's ill-considered statements have already sown doubt in the minds of our European partners as to whether they can count on American resolve, commitment, and strength in the future. Those statements also threaten to weaken our collective deterrence against Vladimir Putin from further territorial aggression in Europe after his invasions of Ukraine and Georgia. If Trump's policy was implemented, it would undermine the essential credibility of the United States in Europe and around the world."

Among those signing were Thomas Pickering, UN ambassador under the first President Bush; Steven Pifer, a top-level State Department official in the second Bush administration, with responsibility for Russia and Ukraine; John Bellinger III, chief counsel for the National Security

Council and later the State Department in the second Bush administration; and neo-conservatives Kori Schake and Randy Scheunemann, officials in the second Bush White House and advisers to the McCain-Palin Republican presidential campaign in 2008.

The *Wall Street Journal* reported Thursday that 45 prominent Republicans have so far come out publicly for Clinton, in an effort coordinated by campaign Chairman John Podesta and Leslie Dach, a former Wal-Mart executive and longtime Clinton crony. Clinton herself has participated in the wooing of top Republicans, phoning Hewlett-Packard CEO Meg Whitman, the Republican candidate for governor of California in 2010, last month. Whitman declared her support for Clinton Tuesday and pledged a six-figure donation to the campaign.

According to the *Journal*, "The effort, which largely targets national-security experts and business leaders, began several months ago but has ramped up in the wake of Mr. Trump's recent troubles, including his spat with the parents of a Muslim US Army captain who died in Iraq, people familiar with the effort said. It is expected to culminate in a Republicans for Hillary group, whose members will endorse her candidacy."

One Republican former Reagan and Bush administration official, Frank Lavin, told the *Journal* he had been reassured by the Democratic National Convention and Clinton's selection of Senator Tim Kaine of Virginia as her running mate. "I have an increasing comfort level with Hillary Clinton," he told the newspaper. "She's not going to be bossed around by the Bernie Sanders wing of the party."

The *Washington Post* carried a similar report Thursday night on Clinton's "outreach to potential Republican converts, including donors, elected officials, and business and foreign policy leaders. The message is simple: Even if you have never before considered voting for a Democrat, and even if you don't like Clinton, choosing her this year is a moral and patriotic imperative." The informal slogan of the outreach effort, according to the newspaper, was "duty, honor, country," an indication of the extremely right-wing

posture being taken by the Clinton campaign.

Clinton aides told the newspaper that the patriotic campaign was aided by Trump's comments on foreign policy, particularly his praise of Russian President Vladimir Putin, and by his public attacks on the father and mother of a Muslim US Army soldier, Captain Humayun Khan, who was killed by a suicide bomber in Iraq.

Clinton herself has begun to appeal publicly to Republicans to support her campaign as a "patriotic duty," as the Associated Press put it Thursday. She told a union hall audience in Las Vegas, "I want to be the president for all Americans—Democrats, Republicans, independents. We're going to pull America together again."

The shift to the right was unveiled at the Democratic National Convention, where an array of former generals paid tribute to Clinton as the best choice for "commander-in-chief," and billionaire Michael Bloomberg, the former Republican mayor of New York City, was given a featured position as a Clinton endorser.

The choice of Bloomberg (net worth \$48 billion) was a signal of the real social constituency to which Clinton is appealing. It was followed July 30 with the endorsement of Clinton at a Pittsburgh rally by media billionaire Mark Cuban (net worth \$3 billion), a right-wing libertarian and devotee of Ayn Rand.

August 1 found Clinton being introduced to an Omaha, Nebraska campaign event by investor Warren Buffett, whose personal net worth of \$63.3 billion, derived entirely from financial speculation, makes him one of the richest men on Earth. On August 3 came the endorsement by Meg Whitman (net worth \$2.1 billion), and on August 3, backing from hedge fund mogul Seth Klarman (net worth \$1.35 billion), who has generally donated to Republican candidates in the past.

Several groups have been formed to harness the support of wealthy Republicans behind the Democratic nominee. These include Republicans for Her 2016, led by Republican lobbyist Craig Snyder; R4C16, led by officials from President George W. Bush's administration; and the Republican Women for Hillary, which is led by US Chamber of Commerce official Jennifer Pierotti Lim.

Other prominent billionaires (Democrats and Republicans) supporting Clinton include Walmart heiress Ann Walton (net worth \$5 billion); LinkedIn founder Reid Hoffman (\$3.8 billion); Univision television network owner Haim Saban (\$3.6 billion); Hyatt Hotel chain heir J.B. Pritzker (\$3.4 billion); Slim-Fast founder Daniel Abraham (\$2 billion); Marc Benioff of Salesforce.com (\$4 billion); Facebook executive Sheryl Sandberg (\$1.4 billion); medical industry heirs Jon and Pat Stryker (\$2.3 billion); television personality Oprah Winfrey (\$3.1 billion); and Hollywood

producers Steven Spielberg (\$3.6 billion) and Jeffrey Katzenberg (\$1 billion).

Especially noteworthy is the large number of Wall Street financiers backing Clinton. These include speculator George Soros (\$24.9 billion), hedge fund managers James Simons (\$14 billion), David E. Shaw (\$4.7 billion) and Tom Steyer (\$1.6 billion); venture capitalist John Doerr (\$4.7 billion); and banker Herbert Sandler (\$1.2 billion).

The combined wealth of the aforementioned billionaires openly backing Clinton is roughly \$200 billion—divided among 21 individuals. This is roughly the same amount that the Obama administration proposes for education, housing, transportation and science in its 2016 budget.

This line-up demonstrates the worthlessness of Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders's claims, as he ended his campaign and endorsed Clinton, that the Democratic Party had been fundamentally changed by his "political revolution." Sanders denounced "the billionaire class" throughout his campaign, rallying the support of millions, including large numbers of young people and students. But he delivered his supporters to the tender mercies of a candidate who is a trusted servant of that billionaire class.

At his speech to the Democratic convention, Sanders claimed that Clinton's campaign had "the most progressive platform" in history. Within days, America's financial aristocracy has reminded everyone just who owns Clinton and the entire Democratic Party.

Sanders did not create the mass opposition of working class and youth that found brief expression in his campaign. His aim, as he repeatedly stated, was to absorb that opposition within the Democratic Party, which, he argued, could be made a vehicle of social reform.

In conceding to Clinton, Sanders fulfilled his campaign's mission. Her subsequent sharp turn to the right—which includes not just fulsome support from billionaires, but from the military-intelligence apparatus based largely on warmongering against Russia—has very rapidly exposed the reactionary character of Sanders' politics, and the bankruptcy of any perspective that claims that working people and youth can achieve progressive change through the Democratic Party.



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