

# Chelsea Manning to run as a Democrat in Maryland Senate race

Nick Barrickman  
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Chelsea Manning, the former United States Army private jailed for seven years for leaking documents exposing US government atrocities in Iraq, Afghanistan and beyond, filed last month to run as a Democrat in next June's Senate race in Maryland.

"We live in trying times. Times of fear, of suppression, of hate," states Manning in a campaign video. In front of grainy images of riot police attacking unarmed protesters, white supremacists marching in Charlottesville, and President Donald Trump meeting with members of Congress, Manning declares, "We need to stop expecting that our systems will somehow fix themselves. We need to actually take the reins of power from them... We need to challenge them at every level. We need to fix this. We don't need them anymore. We can do better. You're damn right we got this."

A Manning interview with the *Washington Post* focuses on three policy areas: criminal justice reform ("We need to start closing prisons. We need to start releasing prisoners."); free "no questions asked" healthcare, paid for with deep cuts to the US military budget ("Look at the defense budget. We're spending almost \$600 billion a year on weapons of war."); and open borders. According to her campaign, the former whistleblower has raised nearly \$50,000 in small donations since announcing her candidacy.

Manning, who last year had her sentence commuted after serving seven years in solitary confinement as punishment for her delivering hundreds of thousands of incriminating military and diplomatic files to WikiLeaks, will be challenging the incumbent Senator, Democrat Benjamin Cardin.

A two-time senator with close ties to the region's intelligence and military establishment, Cardin has a multimillion-dollar campaign fund and is heavily

favored to win the Democratic primary June 26 and the general election in November.

Like so many others before her, Manning is engaged in a misguided effort to seek political and social reforms through the capitalist two-party system. Manning has claimed that the presidency of Barack Obama left behind "hints of a progressive legacy," which ought to be protected by "strong and unapologetic progressive" leadership.

She declared this to be the case despite the vicious, inhumane and, according to international and domestic law, illegal treatment she received at the hands of the US government and by the Obama administration in particular. Manning's arrest, torture, trial, conviction and years in solitary confinement all took place with Obama in the White House. Obama commuted her jail sentence in one of his final acts as president, allowing her to leave prison only several months into Trump's term in office.

There is an element of tragedy in Manning's decision to seek the nomination of the Democratic Party. She, of all people, should know better than to promote illusions in this party of imperialist war and attacks on democratic rights. Rather than her revelations of US war crimes bringing a stop to the actions of US imperialism, Obama accelerated the criminal activities of the Pentagon and CIA, setting the stage for Trump's current preparations for full-scale wars with "major powers," including those armed with nuclear weapons.

Cardin, whom Manning is challenging, is the ranking Democrat on the powerful Senate Foreign Relations Committee and has played a key role in the right-wing witch hunt against "foreign meddling" in US elections, aimed at promoting a militaristic anti-Russian foreign policy while tarring political opposition to US war plans as the work of "Russian agents." Last month, the

Maryland senator released a 200-page document denouncing Russian President Vladimir Putin and calling attention to “the true scope and scale of Putin’s pattern of undermining democracy in Russia and across Europe.”

The document demanded Trump be “clear-eyed about the Russian threat, take action to strengthen our government’s response and our institutions, and—as have other presidents in times of crisis—mobilize our country and work with an international coalition to counter the threat and assert our values.”

In a clear demonstration of how the “Russian meddling” claim is being used to stifle political dissent, there have already been attempts by Democratic Party pundits to attack Manning as an alleged “Russian stooge.” A Twitter posting, re-tweeted thousands of times, cites Manning’s former association with WikiLeaks, which has been slandered by both Democrats and Republicans as a “hostile non-state intelligence service” allied with Russia. It presents Manning’s decision to run against one of the leaders of the anti-Russian McCarthyite campaign as proof she is a pawn in a Kremlin plot.



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