

Democrat Elizabeth Warren enters US presidential race

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On New Year's Eve, Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts announced the formation of an exploratory committee to prepare a campaign for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2020. The formation of the committee is the main preliminary to launching a campaign, allowing Warren to raise money, hire staff and build a campaign organization.

Warren joins four lesser-known candidates who have already declared their intention to run, including former representative John Delaney of Maryland, former Obama housing secretary Julian Castro, West Virginia state senator Richard Ojeda and multimillionaire Andrew Yang.

The entry of the first major candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination is the beginning of a political fraud that will unfold over the next 673 days, until November 3, 2020. The Democratic Party will pretend to offer a progressive alternative to the politics of racism, reaction and militarism espoused by President Donald Trump. Its allies in the media, the trade unions and the pseudo-left groups will seek to present this reactionary party of big business as the advocate and defender of working people.

Some three dozen Democrats are reportedly mulling presidential campaigns, including as many as 10 senators, four governors, four members of the House, four mayors or former mayors, two billionaires (Michael Bloomberg and Tom Steyer) and former vice president Joe Biden, considered the front-runner if he enters the race.

The list is less an embarrassment of riches than an embarrassment, full stop. It demonstrates not the vigor of the Democratic Party, but its sclerotic character. The two leading candidates, Biden and Sanders, are 76 and 77 years old, respectively. This matches the three top leaders of the Democrats in the House of Representatives, who are 78, 79 and 78. Warren herself will be 71 on Election Day. Not a single candidate is identified with a significant social reform. Not a single candidate has any genuine connection to the struggles of working people.

Judging by the four-and-a-half-minute video released by Warren as she made the announcement, her campaign is aimed at securing the "left" lane in the contest for the Democratic nomination, displacing Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, who

has not yet announced his intentions but shows every sign of preparing to run again.

The video, narrated by Warren, portrays her as an untiring fighter against corporate greed and the wealthy, who are portrayed, for good reason, as having robbed the American people blind. Graphs and charts show the decline in incomes for working-class families—referred to always as the "middle class"—in contrast to the accumulation of wealth at the top of American society.

The video, for all its populist pretensions, is notably silent on the role of the Democratic Party in the growth of economic inequality, particularly the Obama administration's bailout of the banks and its decision to block any efforts to punish the Wall Street speculators who triggered the 2008 global financial collapse. Obama is mentioned only for his role in appointing Warren to set up the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau (CFPB), the toothless agency established after the financial collapse to provide a pretense of reform.

The video makes no reference at all to the Trump administration's savage persecution of immigrants, including the ban on visitors from Muslim countries, the forcible separation of children from parents seeking asylum, the mobilization of federal troops to the border or the ongoing confrontation over Trump's demands for a border wall.

While the language of Warren's criticism of Wall Street is radical-sounding, the practical measures she proposes do not touch the fundamentals of the profit system. Along with several cosponsors, she introduced a bill last summer, the Accountable Capitalism Act, aimed at promoting a political swindle of the first order: the claim that the capitalist system, based on the exploitation of the labor of tens of millions of workers for the profit of a handful of capitalists, can be made "accountable" and "fair" for working people.

The bill would compel every corporation worth more than \$1 billion to seek a federal charter—all US corporations currently operate under state charters, frequently issued by the state of Delaware, a notoriously lax regulator—under which measures similar to the German system of "co-determination" would be required. This would include placing "representatives" of the employees, usually union officials, on the boards of directors, limiting stock buybacks and other methods of enriching

executives and big shareholders, and restricting corporate political contributions.

Aside from the obvious perks for the unions, the major purpose of the bill was to set out a case for capitalism and divert the rising support for socialism among working people and rank-and-file Democratic Party voters, who, according to polls published last year, preferred socialism to capitalism by a significant majority. That Warren would embrace such a perspective is no surprise, given her background as a longtime Republican throughout the administrations of Nixon, Ford, Reagan and George H. W. Bush, who has always supported conventional conservative “free market” economic policies.

Warren switched to the Democratic Party only in the mid-1990s, after her appointment to a tenured position at Harvard and after her focus on bankruptcy law led to rising prominence as an expert on the exponential rise in personal bankruptcies among working people. She wrote several best-selling books on the impact of declining incomes and rising health care costs on the budgets of working families, before coming to national attention as the chair of a committee appointed by Congress to oversee the Wall Street bailout.

After Obama nominated her to head the CFPB, and Republicans blocked the nomination with a filibuster, Warren launched her political career, returning to Massachusetts and defeating Republican Senator Scott Brown in 2012. She won reelection easily in November and her reelection campaign staff has now transitioned to her presidential operation.

Despite her tub-thumping attacks on Wall Street, Warren has been a patsy for big business in every serious crisis. She firmly supported the bailout of the auto industry, in which the Obama administration demanded a 50 percent cut in starting pay for all newly hired workers, escalating the spread of two-tier wage systems throughout manufacturing. She appeared at a conference of “left” Democrats in Detroit in 2014 and made no mention of the bankruptcy being imposed on Detroit by the Republican state government with the support of the Obama White House, in which a Democratic bankruptcy lawyer, Kevyn Orr, was installed as emergency financial manager and effective dictator over the city. Orr ruthlessly carried out his assigned task of imposing budget and pension cuts.

Entirely absent from Warren’s campaign video and her statement announcing the formation of an exploratory committee is any reference to foreign policy. In that, as well as her anti-billionaire demagoguery, she might appear to be following the example of Sanders in 2016, who said little or nothing about foreign policy and made no appeal to popular antiwar sentiment against the notoriously hawkish Hillary Clinton.

But Warren has been preparing a substantive foreign policy position of an entirely conventional, pro-imperialist character. This began with obtaining a coveted seat on the Senate Armed Services Committee in 2017, followed by trips to the war zones in Iraq and Afghanistan with Republican senators John McCain and Lindsey Graham, adamant advocates of US military

intervention abroad.

Warren gave a major foreign policy speech in November at American University in Washington in which she cited the need to end “unsustainable and ill-advised military commitments” around the world, including an end to the war in Afghanistan and a reduction in the resources devoted to the Pentagon. Echoing the recent Pentagon revision of its national defense posture, which declared that great power competition, not terrorism, was now its central focus, she said that “after years as the world’s lone superpower, the United States is entering a new period of competition.”

The Democratic senator criticized some specifics of the Trump administration’s foreign policy, saying, “In some cases, as with our support for Saudi Arabia’s proxy war in Yemen, US policies risk generating even more extremism.” She called for stepped-up sanctions on Russia for its alleged intervention in Ukraine and “meddling” in US elections, and attacked the Trump administration for its denial of climate change and its pullout of the Paris climate agreement.

This was followed by an article published in the January-February issue of *Foreign Affairs*, the principal journal of the US national security establishment, in which she espouses a criticism of globalization that frequently dovetails with that of Trump. In one passage, after hailing the “victory” of the United States in the Cold War, she writes that after this, “Policymakers were willing to sacrifice American jobs in hopes of lowering prices for consumer goods at home and spreading open markets abroad.” She continues: “They pushed former Soviet states to privatize as quickly as possible despite the risk of corruption, and they advocated China’s accession to the World Trade Organization despite its unfair trading practices.”

Warren warns that the focus on the “war on terror” has undermined US military capabilities for fighting more powerful rivals, and distracted Washington’s attention away from pressing challenges in Asia, Europe and Latin America (she cites Venezuela as a particular concern).

There is not a hint of an appeal to popular antiwar sentiment, but rather the voicing of concerns, similar to those of Trump, that Washington must focus on China and Russia and rebuild its manufacturing and technology base against supposed inroads from abroad.

In other words, Warren offers a warmed-over liberal imperialism, with a bit of anti-Wall Street demagoguery to disguise what is a firm commitment to the defense of US corporate interests and strategic positions around the world.



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