Bernie Sanders halts campaign activities over health crisis

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4 October 2019

Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders temporarily suspended his campaign Wednesday after he was hospitalized with chest pain and had two stents inserted in an artery. Campaign officials said they had canceled his events for several days and that the candidate would be resting.

Sanders was taken to a hospital in Las Vegas, Nevada after a campaign event, after experiencing "some chest discomfort," according to longtime aide Jeff Weaver. Doctors found a blockage in one artery and inserted two stents.

"Senator Sanders is conversing and in good spirits," Weaver said in a statement. "He will be resting up over the next few days. We are canceling his events and appearances until further notice, and we will continue to provide appropriate updates." The cancelled events were scheduled for California and Iowa later this week. Also canceled were $1.3 million in television ads in Iowa, scheduled to coincide with Sanders' live appearances.

It is not known whether Sanders will be recovered in time to participate in the October 15 debate in Westerville, Ohio, where he would be one of a record 12 candidates on the same stage, an event moderated by CNN and the *New York Times*. (Billionaire Tom Steyer and Representative Tulsi Gabbard have been added to the field of ten who qualified for September's debate in Houston).

Inserting a stent is a common procedure in the United States, done as many as a million times a year. Patients can return home within a day or two, and without complications can resume normal activities soon after. Campaigning for the presidency is, however, one of the more strenuous of pursuits, particularly for a 78-year-old. Sanders is the oldest candidate in the 2020 presidential race, but three others are of a similar age: former Vice President Joe Biden is 76, President Trump is 73, and Senator Elizabeth Warren is 70.

In the two days leading up to his hospitalization, Sanders participated in three events in New Hampshire on Sunday, then four events in the same state Monday, followed by a flight to Nevada for yet another campaign event on Monday night.

The Sanders campaign said the candidate began experiencing chest pain during an event Tuesday night, where he was speaking to local supporters at a fund-raiser at a Las Vegas restaurant. He asked a staff member for a chair, rather than standing and speaking as is his usual practice.

Sanders has suffered two health problems since launching his second presidential campaign. In March, he hit his head on the edge of a glass shower door and needed seven stitches to close the wound. More recently, he has suffered from hoarseness—quite obvious during the September Democratic debate—to the point that he had to cancel several campaign events.

Sanders has no previous history of heart disease, but has suffered from gout and diverticulitis, although his doctors previously had declared him to be in good general health.

Sanders' hospitalization came after his campaign's announcement of its largest fundraising quarter of the year—and the largest for any Democratic candidate so far—some $25.3 million raised between July 1 and September 30. This tops his second quarter total of $18.7 million, bringing his total for the year to $61.5 million.

The campaign said that 1.4 million donations came in during the third quarter, by far the most of any campaign, with an average amount of $18.07. Candidates must have collected 165,000 donations to qualify for the November Democratic presidential

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debate, and only ten candidates have reached that figure.

The Sanders campaign also claimed that it had received donations from 1 million voters in the United States, many of them repeat donors, but that 99 percent have given less than the federal maximum of $2,800 and therefore can make additional donations.

The health scare for Sanders underscores the political bankruptcy of those forces in American pseudo left who have claimed that he is capable, single-handedly, of transforming the Democratic Party—one of the oldest and most reactionary capitalist parties on the planet—into a vehicle for social reform, and even for socialism.

The Democratic Socialists of America committed themselves to such a perspective at their August convention, voting to endorse Sanders for the Democratic nomination and declaring that Bernie, and only Bernie, could be the vehicle for such an exercise in political alchemy.

As we noted earlier this year, the leading editorial apologist for the DSA is Bhaskar Sunkara, editor of *Jacobin* magazine. The WSWS commented on Sunkara's appearance at the "Socialism in Our Time" conference in New York City: "Aside from the unprincipled character of subordinating their own activities to this right-wing, big-business party, the DSA's whole political strategy revolves around one man, five years older than the current president. What if Sanders is unable to continue?"

Sunkara went on to prepare a fallback position. He told the *New York Times* in May that if Bernie should falter, Elizabeth Warren and even former Vice President Joe Biden could merit the support of "socialists" like himself.

Yesterday *Jacobin* published an article reporting Sanders' hospitalization, while reassuring its readers that the stent procedure was routine and the prognosis for Sanders full recovery and resumption of his campaign was excellent.

Medically, no one should wish for anything but a positive outcome for Sanders. Politically, however, a resumed campaign would remain what it has always been: a trap for workers and young people, aimed at appealing to their instinctive socialist sympathies, and diverting these into support for a party that is one of the two main political instruments of the most rapacious capitalist ruling class in the world.

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