

# Obama spearheads campaign against Sanders' nomination as Democratic presidential candidate

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The first votes for the Democratic presidential nomination will be cast in two months' time, in the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primary. With former President Barack Obama taking the lead, the Democratic Party is moving to ensure that issues of social inequality and wealth distribution are excluded from the elections.

An article in *Politico* last week ("Waiting for Obama") reported that the "Democratic establishment is counting on [Obama] to stop Trump and, perhaps, stave off Bernie as well."

While noting that Obama's public position is that he will support whatever candidate is nominated, the article states, "There is one potential exception: Back when Sanders seemed like more of a threat than he does now, Obama said privately that if Bernie were running away with the nomination, Obama would speak up to stop him."

The report conforms to what Obama has said in statements over the past two weeks to party donors and fundraisers in Washington, DC and California. He claimed that the American people were opposed to any radical change. "This is still a country that is less revolutionary than it is interested in improvement," Obama said. "They like seeing things improved. But the average American doesn't think we have to completely tear down the system and remake it... They just don't want to see crazy stuff."

He continued, "We also have to be rooted in reality and the fact that voters, including the Democratic voters and certainly persuadable independents or even moderate Republicans, are not driven by the same views that are reflected on certain, you know, left-leaning Twitter feeds. Or the activist wing of our

party."

While he did not name them, the meaning was clear, as the *New York Times* noted: "His comments offered an implicit critique of Senators Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren..."

The concern of the Democratic Party establishment is not over Sanders and Warren, both of whom are tested political operatives. Rather, they do not want to run an election that appeals even in a limited way to the class-based concerns of the vast majority of the population.

Beginning with Obama's statement that the 2016 election was an "intramural scrimmage" between two sides of the same team, the Democrats have sought to redirect popular hostility to Trump behind their militarist, anti-Russia campaign, the focus of the impeachment drive. This will be combined with efforts to promote divisions based on race and gender.

Obama was only the most prominent spokesman for a right-wing campaign throughout the month of November, including commentaries and editorials in the *Times* and the *Washington Post* (owned by Amazon billionaire Jeff Bezos), an op-ed from former Treasury Secretary Lawrence Summers, and public statements from billionaires Warren Buffett, Bill Gates, Mark Cuban and Leon Cooperman, all attacking proposals by Warren and Sanders for a tax on accumulated wealth.

Billionaire Michael Bloomberg went even further, officially announcing himself as a belated candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination and funding a \$30 million advertising blitz that began last week.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi joined in with an attack on the health care proposal identified with Sanders and Warren. "I'm not a big fan of Medicare-for-all," she said on Bloomberg TV, the cable network controlled by

the billionaire now-candidate. She claimed that “there is a comfort level that some people have with their current private insurance.”

Both Warren and Sanders have responded by shifting to the right. Warren has backpedaled on her “Medicare for All” proposal, releasing a “Plan B” that backtracks on the main component of her campaign.

For his part, Sanders was queried in last month’s Democratic presidential debate about Obama’s repudiation of revolution. “Is President Obama wrong?” the moderator asked Sanders. The Vermont senator shelved his rhetoric about “political revolution” and meekly replied, “No, he’s right. We don’t have to tear down the system, but we do have to do what the American people want.”

Both Sanders and Warren accept the fraudulent presentation of the Obama administration as a “progressive” government that laid the basis for further social reforms. They make no criticism of Obama’s bailout of Wall Street, his wage-cutting attacks on auto workers, or his slashing of federal support to public education and other social programs. They do not address the undeniable political fact that it was the alignment of the Obama administration with corporate America that drove sizeable sections of workers to turn their backs on the Democratic Party and either vote for Trump or stay home on Election Day in 2016.

Most critically, they support the foreign policy consensus in the Democratic Party that underlies the campaign to impeach Trump, not for his real crimes against immigrant workers and the democratic rights of the American people, but for his transgressions against the demands of the military-intelligence apparatus in relation to Ukraine, Russia and the Middle East.

Warren has publicly embraced the Trump administration’s efforts to strangle Venezuela with financial sanctions, while tacitly supporting the overthrow of Bolivian President Evo Morales by a right-wing US-backed campaign in which the Bolivian military played the central role. Sanders has referred to the overthrow of Morales as a “coup,” but offers no alternative to the aggressive assertion of US imperialist interests around the world, which is supported by both the Democrats and Republicans.

And like most Democrats, Sanders has criticized Trump’s trade war policies towards China from the right, demanding even more aggressive protectionist

measures that would only add fuel to the mounting global tensions that bring with them the danger of a third world war.

The working class cannot defend its social rights to good-paying jobs, decent schools, medical care and other social services, or fight the growing danger of imperialist war, by means of the Democratic Party. This requires the independent mobilization of the working class in both industrial and political struggle, through strikes, mass demonstrations and the building of an independent political movement directed against the capitalist system based on a socialist program.



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