

Sham Declarations: The Media and Hillary Clinton's "Presumptive" Presidency

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Region: [USA](#)

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In-depth Report: [U.S. Elections](#)

It has the air of legacy about it. The Clinton campaign has now moved forth with confidence to claim a victory over Bernie Sanders, who persists in an admirably tenacious campaign. The Clintonites were given, on Monday, a nugget of value in the form of a declaration by Associated Press.

Evidently assuming that everything was in the bag, the news agency found Hillary Clinton the winner among the Democrats. In actual terms, this was hypothetical, despite the assessment that she had surpassed the 2,383 delegate mark. The unelected superdelegates, numbering 712, have yet to formally declare their intention for either candidate, and the Democratic National Convention has to go through the rounds. Even the functionaries of the National Committee have cautioned against such speculative reasoning.

The release also came before the primary verdicts in six states, including California, were in. No one cast a vote on Monday. This, however, has been the pattern in the Sanders-Clinton tussle. From the moment he won New Hampshire, the senator has faced a media barrage of inflated leads in the superdelegate stakes. With each victory in the popular vote, the rebuff from Clinton was that he could not shake the aptly antidemocratic core, despite doing very nicely with pledged delegates.

What transpired was that some plain badgering on the part of AP reporter Stephen Ohlemacher of various superdelegate worthies yielded material suitable for publication. Hitherto untapped views streamed forth, to be caught by AP reporters. These worthies remain, as such, nameless.

"Hillary Clinton," opened the article, "has commitments from the number of delegates needed to become the Democratic Party's presumptive nominee for president, and will be first woman to top the ticket of a major U.S. political party." [1]

Ohlemacher, with the sort of arrogance that social media feeds, made his role in this affair clear. "Dear superdels," went his June 7 tweet, "I promise to stop calling you 6X a day AP count: Clinton has delegates to win Democratic nomination." [2]

Sanders spokesman, Michael Briggs, was understandably peeved by this act of premature adjudication. "It is unfortunate that the media, in a rush to judgment, are ignoring the Democratic National Committee's clear statement that it is wrong to count the votes of superdelegates before they actually vote at the convention this summer." [3]

Reminding media outlets of Democratic Party procedure, he noted that Clinton was still reliant on superdelegates who do not vote till July 25 "and who can change their minds

between now and then.” The campaign, in other words, remains a live and burning issue.

Like a pool of patrician wisdom, these superdelegates pitched for Clinton, effectively ignoring the popular trend that had seen the candidates in a close race. The managers were evidently getting concerned that the Sanders campaign had been doing a bit *too* well. “The decisive edifice of superdelegates,” noted Glenn Greenwald in *The Intercept*, “is itself anti-democratic and inherently corrupt: designed to prevent actual voters from making choices that the party establishment dislikes.”

Hillary Clinton floated with the AP announcement. A form of historical manufacture was in the making. “Thanks to you,” she told supporters on Tuesday, “we have reached a milestone.” The rush of platitudes proved overwhelming. The “highest, hardest” of glass ceilings had been broken; little girls could dream about becoming president. “Tonight is for you.”

Then came the plea for the Sandernistas to join her, though it is one that is similarly being advanced by Donald Trump. President Barack Obama similarly joined the fabrication, congratulating the candidate he beat in 2008 for having reached the number of delegates necessary for the nomination.

Election observers such as Jeff Stein from *Vox* did not see the unfolding circumstances as all problematic. Sanders was going to lose because he was losing the popular vote. With naïve relish, Stein could say that the superdelegates were merely “voters in line with the broader electorate.”[4] Hardly.

It was fitting that such a move should benefit one half of the Clinton duo. It was inappropriate on the part of AP, adding unjustified, premature political mettle to an ongoing political process. It may well have filtered through the primary voting constituency, sowing a degree of disgust and apathy. Why vote if the result is already in the bag?

A few more Sanders victories would make the superdelegates ponder their positions, possibly tilting towards the socialist senator. Instead, the establishment gospel is being preached again, with victories effectively announced ahead of time by a news outlet. With the primary race now gone to seed, the apparatchiks will breathe a bit easier.

Sanders will have to find some suitable form of retaliation, while some of his supporters, should he chose not to run as an independent, will either stay home or make a pact with an electable devil. The latter, as yet unknown quantity, is a terrifying and deserved prospect.

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Notes:

- [1] <http://bigstory.ap.org/779b7012af24446289623a968926ec04>
- [2] https://twitter.com/stephenatap/status/739980927376457737?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw
- [3] <https://berniesanders.com/press-release/sanders-campaign-statement/>
- [4] <http://www.vox.com/2016/6/6/11873406/bernie-sanders-hillary-clinton-superdelegates>

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