

Why Bernie Sanders Should Stay in the Race—and How He Can Win

By [Kevin Zeese](#) and [Patrick Walker](#)

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Make no mistake: Settling for Hillary Clinton means abandoning the political revolution that Bernie Sanders has inspired. It means unconditional surrender after overcoming many obstacles in a rigged primary. That's why the revolution must continue through November and beyond, and the Vermont senator's supporters must [urge him to keep fighting](#).

The West Virginia primary on Tuesday illustrates why. After his victory there, Sanders wrote: "There is nothing I would like more than to take on and defeat Donald Trump, someone who must never become president of this country."

Unfortunately, he is unlikely to get that opportunity from the Democratic Party. If Sanders does not remain in the race until the end, he will very likely be helping the Republican candidate. Why? Because nearly half of [his voters in West Virginia said they would switch their vote to Trump](#) in November. In fact, we will explain why the best way to prevent Trump from taking the Oval Office would be for Sanders to run on a ticket with Jill Stein, the Green Party candidate.

Sanders' current plan is to get some of his policies into the unenforceable Democratic Party platform and then simply endorse Clinton for president. But because that platform is unenforceable, it will have little value and is belied by the reality that the Democrats serve big business.

Clinton has a long history of representing Wall Street, Wal-Mart, weapons makers and insurance companies. She is in many ways the opposite of Bernie Sanders. The CEOs on Wall Street—and even the Koch oil barons—want her as the nation's chief executive because [her vision and political views align so perfectly](#) with their own. The global 1 percent will be relieved if, when the revolution ends, they are still in charge and the oligarchy lives on. We can't let it end that way.

The Corrupt and Unfair Democratic Primaries

Sanders was an independent for more than three decades until joining the Democratic Party last year, and he knew going into the primaries that he would be fighting establishment Democrats who are closely tied to everything he opposes. No insurgent has won a Democratic primary since the current [system of superdelegates was put in place in 1982 to stop them](#).



This year, that anti-insurgent system also included a plan to have a limited number of

debates (and independent and third-party candidates are blocked from participating in them). The number of debates dropped from [25 in 2008](#) to [less than half that number](#) this election season—and many were scheduled at times when few voters would be able to watch them. Clinton gave in to pressure for more debates when she thought it was in her interest. Ironically, in each of those face-offs, Sanders at least argued Clinton to a draw, and many saw him as the victor. Thus, the debates did not stop his revolution; in many ways, they grew it.

Another part of the establishment's anti-insurgent plan is to front-load the primaries and caucuses by having 39 states and territories vote all in the month of March. This strategy usually destroys insurgents because they do not have the money to compete with well-funded, big-business establishment candidates. The Sanders revolt overcame that obstacle by raising millions in small donations.

Closed primaries are also a feature of that anti-insurgent plan, disenfranchising millions of voters who don't want to join the Democratic or Republican parties. More than 6 million people were deprived of such a vote in New York and Florida alone.

In addition to these anti-democratic tactics, Debbie Wasserman Schultz, the Democratic National Committee chairwoman, was the national co-chair of Clinton's 2008 campaign. Such an in-the-face conflict of interest shows audacious hubris, and the Democrats clearly thought that they could get away with anything to nominate Clinton. Wasserman Schultz has been consistently biased in Clinton's favor, as indicated by her action to deny Sanders' campaign access to the voter database just before the Iowa primary.

In August 2015, Clinton set up an agreement with 33 state Democratic parties for a joint fundraising agreement with the Hillary Victory Fund. This was before the first primary in a contested nomination. Not only was the DNC headed by a Clinton operative, but state parties were tied to Clinton's fundraising, creating an unbreakable bond between her and the party. This allowed Clinton's wealthy donors to multiply their donations astronomically. "A single donor, as [Margot Kidder wrote](#) at Counterpunch, "by giving \$10,000 a year to each signatory state could legally give an extra \$330,000 a year for two years to the Hillary Victory Fund.

"For each donor, this raised their individual legal cap on the Presidential campaign to \$660,000 if given in both 2015 and 2016," Kidder said. "And to one million, three hundred and 20 thousand dollars if an equal amount were also donated in their spouse's name."

Clinton's superdelegates are [chairs of key standing committees](#) as well.

[Sanders has complained to the DNC](#) that the way these funds have been used violates federal election laws. [He also wrote a letter to Wasserman Schultz](#), saying that she is tipping the scales for Clinton's benefit.

Throughout the primary process, there have been voting irregularities. There are too many to review in this article, but they involved the erasing of voter registrations, an insufficient number of polling places, polls that opened late, and so on. In New York and Arizona where some of the worst problems were reported, investigations are ongoing.

Now, Sanders is heading into a Democratic Convention that is rigged against him, and he has more than enough reason to reconsider his previous plan to endorse Hillary Clinton. The

2016 election is historically unique and presents a perfect storm for an independent candidate. As a third-party candidate, Sanders could win the popular vote as well as the 270 electoral votes necessary to take the presidency—and his campaign would actually hurt, not help, Donald Trump.

Jill Stein of the Green Party has indicated that she is open to discussing how she can work with Sanders. By choosing her as his vice presidential running mate and becoming the Green Party nominee, Sanders could get on enough ballots to pose a solid independent challenge to two of the most unpopular major-party candidates in recent memory. It is a historic opportunity that should not be missed.

A General Election More Favorable to an Independent Than Ever Before

Sanders, the longest-serving independent in U.S. history, is well-positioned for a general election campaign because, for the first time, independents make up the largest group of voters. According to an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll, [50 percent of Americans consider themselves independent](#), and fewer than 30 percent align with either major party. Only 21 percent identified as Republicans and 29 percent as Democrats. A 2015 Gallup poll similarly found that a record high number of Americans—[43 percent](#)—consider themselves to be independents.

Since 2008, many more Americans have come to reject the two-party system because voters recognize that both the Democratic and Republican parties represent the interests of big-business donors. Gallup also reports that [60 percent believe a third party](#) is needed “because the Republican and Democratic parties ‘do such a poor job’ of representing the American people.”

In addition, Sanders’ views on the corruption of the American economy and other issues have become [the national consensus](#). A 2015 poll found 83 percent agree and nearly 60 percent “strongly” agree that “the rules of the economy matter and the [top 1 percent have used their influence to shape the rules](#) of the economy to their advantage.”

Americans agree that policies enacted since the economic collapse have [benefited Wall Street, big corporations and the wealthy](#)—but not the poor and middle class. By a factor of 2-to-1, people in the United States [oppose corporate trade deals like the Trans-Pacific Partnership](#) and, by a factor of 3-to-1, believe that such deals destroy more jobs than they create.

Three-quarters of Republicans favor [a steep rise in the minimum wage](#). Four out of five voters, including three-quarters of Republicans, want to [expand Social Security benefits](#). On Sanders’ top issues—Wall Street regulation—pollster [Celinda Lake reported](#) that 91 percent of those asked agree that financial services and products must be regulated to ensure fairness for consumers. Lake also found that 79 percent agree that financial companies should be held accountable with tougher rules and enforcement for the practices that caused the financial crisis.

The influence of Wall Street on candidates is also near the top of voters’ minds, with 84 percent of likely 2016 voters saying that they are concerned and 64 percent indicating that they are very concerned. Majorities across party lines say they would be less likely to vote for a candidate or member of Congress who received large sums of campaign money from big banks and financial companies, and 72 percent of Democrats, 54 percent of

independents and 52 percent of Republicans say they would be more likely to vote for a candidate who favored tough rules on Wall Street to prevent irresponsible practices and abuses.

It is hard to imagine a better political climate for a Sanders-Stein general election campaign.

Sanders Would Be Running Against Unpopular Candidates From Divided Parties



Sanders, if he stays in the race, would be running against [the two most disliked major-party nominees in history](#). Donald Trump is viewed favorably by just 24 percent of the voters and unfavorably by 57 percent, making him by far the least-liked major-party front-runner since CBS began tracking such ratings in 1984. Hillary Clinton is viewed favorably by 31 percent and unfavorably by 52 percent.

Sanders' results are the opposite: His 48 percent favorability rating is by far the highest ever recorded. In the previous eight presidential cycles, there has never been a poll showing both major-party candidates with negative net-favorability ratings, let alone double-digit ones.

On top of that, Sanders would be running against two divided parties. The last two Republican presidents and the last two Republican presidential nominees have said they will not even attend the Republican National Convention, and House Speaker Paul Ryan has said he is not ready to support Trump. The Hill newspaper has published [a list of the top 99 Republican leaders who do not support Trump](#), and a CNN/ORC poll shows that [one-third of Republicans would be dissatisfied or upset](#) if Trump becomes the nominee. [Trump recognizes these deep divisions](#) and is telling the media he does not need a united party.

Even the Koch brothers are saying that they prefer Clinton to Trump, and Clinton is embracing this development. [The New York Times has reported](#) that "Clinton's campaign is repositioning itself, after a year of emphasizing liberal positions and focusing largely on minority voters" and is making "a striking turn ... hoping to gain the support of Republican voters and party leaders including former elected officials and retired generals disillusioned by their party's standard-bearer." If Sanders endorses Clinton, she will have cover to move further to the right.



According to the Times, Clinton is “confident that the young people and liberals backing Senator Bernie Sanders of Vermont will come around” to support her in November. But the reality is that the primary season has revealed a great divide within the Democratic Party. A McClatchy-Marist poll found that [25 percent of Sanders supporters will not vote for Clinton](#), and a Wall Street Journal poll found that [33 percent of Sanders supporters will not vote for Clinton](#). Many Sanders supporters describe her as Sanders’ opposite: He opposes Wall Street, and she is a Wall Street Democrat.

A Trump Victory May Be More Likely Without Sanders

The big fear is that a run by Sanders would result in a Republican victory for Donald Trump. People always hark back to the Gore-Bush-Nader race of 2000, but that is the mistake of fighting the last war and not the current one. (It is also [a myth that Nader cost Gore the election](#).) Things have changed drastically in the 16 years since then. The risk of a Trump victory may actually increase if Sanders does not run.

In the Nader era, independents and the two parties [almost equally divided](#) the electorate. Now the two parties are below 30 percent (the Republicans at 21 percent), and independents are over 43 percent. Not only do fewer voters consider themselves Republicans or Democrats, but even many of those who do are not enthusiastic about their party or their likely nominees.

An NBC News/Wall Street Journal survey found [7 percent of Sanders voters could see themselves supporting Trump](#). These Sanders supporters share a strong dislike of Hillary Clinton and see both Trump and Sanders as outsiders who understand their economic hardship.

Trump is now pursuing Sanders voters. According to AlterNet’s Steven Rosenfeld, Trump has [“recited Sanders’ critique of trade deals, the Iraq war, Clinton’s Goldman-Sachs speeches,](#) and even slammed Medicare prescription drug price gouging as he paints himself on the side of frustrated Americans.”

“As he said on the eve of Indiana’s primary,” Rosenfeld continued. “ ‘I think a lot of the [Bernie Sanders young people are going to join my campaign.](#)’ ”

Trump may be right. [“Forty-four percent of Sanders supporters surveyed](#) said they would rather back the presumptive GOP nominee in November,” an exit poll after the West Virginia primary found, “with only 23 percent saying they’d support Democratic front-runner Hillary Clinton.” Moreover, “31 percent ... would support neither candidate in the likely general election match-up.”

Without Sanders in the picture, Trump could run to Clinton's left, broadening his support base and capitalizing on Clinton's weaknesses. On Wall Street corruption, Trump will be able to say that he did not take funds from Wall Street while Clinton has. Trump has [proposed taxing Wall Street](#), whereas Clinton protects the investment class. Trump has come out for raising the minimum wage while Clinton has been slow and hesitant to support raising it to \$15 an hour. Sanders has already taken these popular positions, making it harder for Trump to benefit from them if Sanders were in the race.

Even on the issue of militarism, where Clinton is weak, Trump has made some sensible statements against wars that contrast with Clinton's militarist positions. Sanders has run to her left on Iraq, Libya, Syria and Israel, as well as on regime change and military engagement. [Jill Stein](#) would bring an even stronger view [against intervention and militarism](#), leaving little room for Trump to take advantage of Hillary's penchant for war, militarism and intervention.

The dynamic of the race would also be different if Sanders is running. Both Sanders and Clinton would have a common opponent in Trump, and each would echo the other's criticism of him. Together, they could prevent Trump from growing his base of support.

Sanders-Stein Could Win 270 Electoral Votes

In April, after the New York primary results came in, Sanders described his winning coalition:

"The reason we are doing so much better against Republican candidates is that not only are we winning ... Democratic votes, but we are winning independent votes and some Republican votes as well. That is a point I hope the delegates to the Democratic convention fully understand. In a general election, everyone—Democratic, independent and Republican—has the right to vote for president. The elections are not closed primaries."

Sanders has defeated Trump by more than [14 points](#) in the last [10 polls](#) measuring who would win if they ran against each other. And [Sanders and Clinton are neck and neck](#) in national polls. Sanders, the most popular politician in the country, does best among independents and youth and is [the strongest general election candidate](#).

Positive or negative ratings often determine the outcome of the election. Sanders is the only candidate who is generally viewed positively.

"Overall, a clear portrait of Sanders emerges that is different from those of the other candidates," [Gallup reported](#). "He has a generally positive image, wins on the 'softer' dimensions of leadership and is above all else seen as caring, enthusiastic and consistent." Further, Sanders "does well across all the [leadership] dimensions, with a more even distribution of perceived leadership characteristics than is the case for the other candidates."

In comparison, [The Wall Street Journal found](#) that 56 percent of both Trump and Clinton voters said they would cast their vote simply because they didn't want the other candidate to win.

[Sanders does better among independents](#), the new plurality that will decide the election, than Clinton or Trump. In the primaries, he beat Clinton among independents by 29

percent. [She has done poorly with independent voters](#) in the primaries thus far and has been unable to win the independent vote in any state other than Alabama.



New voters, especially young ones, are also likely to be a big factor in the outcome of the election, as a [Harvard Institute of Politics poll](#) shows. Jill Stein takes [strong positions on college debt and tuition](#), even stronger than Sanders. She is calling for confronting youth tuition debt, not just the current cost of college. The Sanders-Stein team would excite youth because its agenda would positively impact young people's lives. While more difficult to reach, even the poor who have been disenfranchised by the two Wall Street parties may even see hope and come out to vote. Finally, Sanders-Stein could unite all the parties on the left, including Green, Socialist and Progressive parties. Sanders would also do well enough in polling to ensure the duo's inclusion in the presidential debates. Standing side-by-side with Clinton and Trump would position Sanders well and reach an audience of 60 million. Everything could change with those debates, and the legitimacy of the Sanders-Stein campaign would be solidified. Once people see their potential to win, their numbers would increase. Sanders has already built an impressive national organization of volunteers and donors, and his campaign as a Green Party candidate would be seen as viable by the media and by voters. The other claim being put forward is that no candidate would get 270 electoral votes and that the Republican-led House of Representatives would then decide the election. History shows this is more fear than reality. As Lawrence Tribe and Thomas Rollins [wrote in The Atlantic in 1980](#)—when there was a similar fear that the Reagan-Carter-Anderson race would leave the decision to the House: “[E]xperience teaches that our fears may be more a product of reflex than reflection.” There have been many multi-candidate races in American history, but the last time the House decided the outcome was in 1877—and that was not even because of a multi-candidate race. In fact, the losing candidate won more than 50 percent of the vote. The result got pushed to the House because of fraud. Before that, the House stepped in in 1824, when we had a very different electoral system. Fast-forward to 1992, when Bill Clinton won 40 percent in a three-way race

and got 270 electoral votes.

In the unlikely event that nobody received a majority of electoral votes, Clinton and Sanders could negotiate before the Electoral College voted on Dec. 15 and avoid a House decision. Tribe and Rollins wrote that “a candidate might simply persuade the electors chosen to support him on November 4 to cast their ballots for someone else. Indeed, electors could do so on their own, since the Constitution makes them free agents.”

Each candidate could ensure control of how his electors voted by signing a contract with them, as George Wallace did in 1968. Two days before the election, Nixon and Wallace were negotiating on the electors, but then Nixon won the Electoral College and no deal was needed. Imagine what a Sanders-Clinton negotiation could produce.

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Sanders and Stein could be a coalition that could not only win a plurality of popular votes in a three-way race but could also win 270 electoral votes. ([Here is one possible map of how Sanders could pull it off.](#))

Their campaign would also bolster the campaigns of progressives who are running for Congress and share the Sanders-Stein agenda; and it would open space for future independent party challenges to the [corporate political duopoly](#).

The Path to Ballot Access Across the Nation

This late in the game, there is only one path to getting on the ballot across the nation, and it cannot be done by running as an independent. Sanders would need to create an alliance with the Green Party, which is currently on 21 ballots (including some of the largest and most difficult states) and is on a path to being on almost all ballots.

Twelve states have deadlines for ballot access for independent candidates before the Democratic National Convention, which will take place July 25-28. Some important states are in that group, including Florida, Illinois, Michigan, North Carolina, Texas and Washington. By Aug. 15, 18 more states are due, among them California, Colorado, Ohio and Pennsylvania. Thus, it is impossible for Sanders to run an independent campaign after the Democratic National Convention.

But there is an alternative: [Jill Stein, the presumptive nominee of the Green Party](#), wrote to Sanders after the New York primary to discuss “ways they and their campaigns could work together to win a progressive political revolution in the United States.” Stein sought to “have a conversation to explore possible collaboration, in this hour of unprecedented crisis and potential for transformative change.” In an [interview with Dennis Trainor Jr.](#), she said

she would even be open to running as the vice presidential nominee if Sanders wanted the Green Party presidential nomination.

Sanders should meet with Jill Stein to determine where this could lead. Even if Sanders decides not to do anything further, meeting with Stein would *strengthen his hand in negotiating with Clinton*. The Democrats would then realize that Sanders has somewhere to go other than the Democratic Party, and the alternative path is consistent with his history as the longest-serving independent in the Congress.

Electing President Sanders

Those who want to see the Sanders campaign continue through Election Day need to urge Sanders to meet with Jill Stein and to not endorse Clinton. Sanders will only change course if he is pushed from the grass roots. In addition to massive [petition, email and social media campaigns](#), people need to plan to come to the Democratic Convention and protest outside and inside, saying: “No Endorsement for Hillary” and “Sanders, Run Green.” If grass-roots activists succeed in doing so, the 2016 electoral revolution could end with President Sanders in the White House.

Patrick Walker, a veteran anti-fracking and Occupy Wall Street activist, is co-founder of [Revolt Against Plutocracy](#) and co-creator of the [Bernie or Bust pledge](#), which spawned the nationwide Bernie or Bust movement. This article represents both his personal views and the official standpoint of Revolt Against Plutocracy.

Kevin Zeese has worked on multiple Green and independent campaigns, including as spokesman for Ralph Nader in 2004. Zeese is co-director of [Popular Resistance](#), which grew out of the Occupy movement. This article represents his personal views.

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