

A Bernie Sanders Candidacy Would Be Great for Republicans



If the reports we've been hearing this week are correct, U.S. Senator Bernie Sanders will soon be announcing his candidacy for the 2016 Democratic presidential nomination. This would pit the 74-year-old, self-proclaimed socialist from Vermont up against a highly favored Hillary Clinton, who most believed would go virtually

unchallenged by her party in her ascension to the Oval Office.

I don't know about the rest of you, but as a right-leaning guy who thinks the country needs a conservative thinker back in the White House in 2016, I'm pretty excited about this. I'm excited because I think Sanders has the potential to do quite a bit of political damage to Mrs. Clinton—possibly as much or even more than the developing email-server and money-corruption scandals will.

One of the important news stories the media has willfully missed in recent years—electing instead to focus on the internal battle within the GOP—is the very real division that exists within the Democratic Party. Despite the hard-left turn President Obama has pulled this country into since taking the reins in 2009, there are many within the *progressive* movement who—believe it or not—actually feel that's he's been far too slow and timid in advancing the liberal agenda.

These people aren't just part of some fringe, easily-discarded

element of the Democratic Party like the groups that have gotten behind candidates like Howard Dean and Dennis Kucinich in the past. The people I'm talking about make up a significant, growing portion of the modern-day liberal movement. They were the ones who were wholeheartedly sold on President Obama's rhetoric on concepts like *social justice* and *economic fairness*, but have become frustrated over not yet seeing the perceived rewards of such pursuits.

People like Bernie Sanders and Elizabeth Warren from Massachusetts have become champions of this movement that includes many young people in their 20's and 30's, and others who feel that the capitalist/free-market system is unjust, bigoted, and fundamentally rigged against them.

While such people would vote for Hillary Clinton in a heartbeat over any Republican, they're not particularly impressed with her. They certainly don't trust her. They take her populist rhetoric with a grain of salt, and they're not shy about admitting that.

With Bernie Sanders, however, they believe he's sincere, and that he speaks for them. They're not even squeamish over the fact that he presents himself as a socialist. My liberal friends from all over the country are *always* posting Internet memes from Sanders (and Warren) on social media—you know, those images with quotes embedded in them that are supposed to sound profound and resonate with an instinctive sense of justice? They think the guy's a rock star who makes a heck of a lot of sense.

In many ways, Sanders is the Ron Paul of the left. Despite his age and crotchety demeanor, his message resonates with young people who don't feel particularly comfortable with the platforms of either major political party. And just like with Paul, the influence that comes with his fan-base will let him change the tone and direction of primary debate topics in ways that will force mainstream party candidates into awkward side-

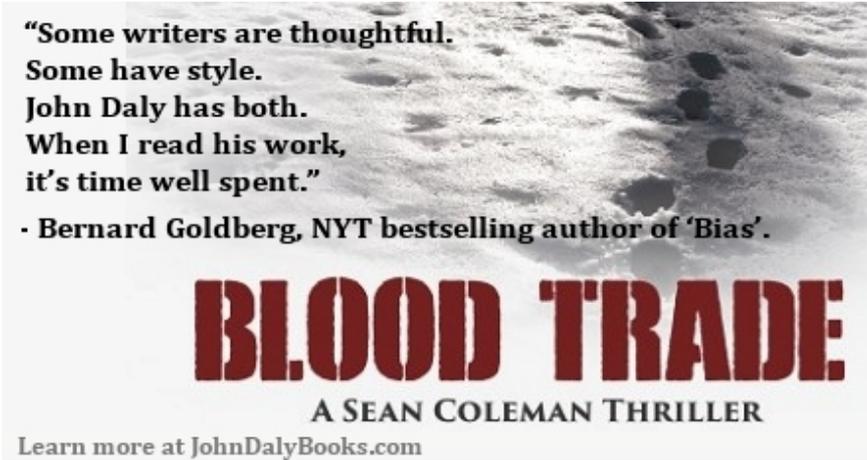
discussions, and having to address issues they'd much rather skirt around.

As we saw with Hillary's 2008 campaign, and even in recent months, she's *terrible* at walking that line between appeasing the hard-left with obligatory *red meat* lip-service and appealing to the sensibilities of moderates. She comes across as someone who's unprincipled and rehearsed, and when she's thrown a curve-ball from the left, the result is almost always awkward and accident-prone. With a bulldog like Sanders in the race to continually hold her feet to *progressive flames* and keep pulling her further left, I fully expect some of these Democratic debates to turn into circuses of hard-left one-upsmanship. Sanders of course won't win in the end, but by the time it's over, Hillary could end up sounding just like him on the issues, and have a heck of a hard time trying to get back to the center for the general election.

This is a good thing for Republicans, who aren't going to have to deal this time with that kind of distraction during the debates. If Ted Cruz is the most disruptive figure of the bunch, they'll be in pretty good shape.

So I welcome Bernie Sanders' entrance into the 2016 race. He'd end up doing the GOP and America a great service.

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Could Rick Perry Be a Viable Candidate in 2016?

☒ Governor Rick Perry made some news earlier this week when he appeared on Jimmy Kimmel's show (from Austin, Texas) and discussed the possibility of decriminalizing the use of marijuana in the Lone Star State.

Listening to Perry, I thought he laid out a pretty decent, thoughtful argument for moving in that direction. He also touted some past reforms he made in his state to lessen the severity of pot-related charges. He qualified the measures by saying, "you don't want to ruin a kid's life for having a joint."

Though the drug conversation was what spawned some headlines, it wasn't what made the interview interesting to me.

As I watched Perry discuss his accomplishments, and state his

views on different issues, I was taken back by how relaxed, articulate, and confident he seemed, even with the liberal Austin audience giving him a hard time. It reminded me quite a bit of Perry's early presidential primary debates back in September of 2011. As you might recall, Perry was a last minute entrant into the race, filling a void that some within the GOP establishment recognized as a weak field of candidates.

In his first debate, Perry was bold, self-assured, and spoke with moral clarity. He was unafraid to say the things he truly believed.

In regard to Social Security's financial outlook, he said, "It is a Ponzi scheme to tell our kids that are 25 or 30 years old today, you're paying into a program that's going to be there. Anybody that's for the status quo with Social Security today is involved with a monstrous lie to our kids, and it's not right."

The statement drew questions about Perry's commitment to our Social Security system, an issue that Democrats have long used to fear-monger votes away from Republicans.

In his second debate, Perry voiced a view on illegal immigration that wasn't very popular with a lot of conservatives.

"If you say that we should not educate children who come into our state for no other reason than that they've been brought there through no fault of their own, I don't think you have a heart."

It was clear that after those first couple of performances, Perry's consultants rushed in to advise him not to show such candor, and to recognize the political ramifications of making such statements. I think they got into his head, and his campaign suffered from it.

He went from being a steadfast, breath of fresh air, to an empty Republican suit who was so over-rehearsed and careful about what he said, that he no longer appeared comfortable in his own skin. He began botching his talking points left and right, and by the end of the campaign, he was making appearances on shows like *David Letterman*, merely to poke fun at himself.

It was a shame.

I think many people, like myself, viewed him as an independent-minded conservative that could strike a chord with the broader electorate. He was a highly successful governor who had a fantastic, pro-business record of job creation in his state, at a time when desperately few jobs were being created elsewhere in this country. He was an undoubtedly strong leader, yet he let people convince him not to be himself, and his campaign never recovered from it.

I think he probably learned a lot from the experience.

When Jimmy Kimmel asked Perry if he planned on running again in 2016, Perry answered, "You know, America is a great place for second chances."

Does he have a point?

We know that Democratic politicians are always receiving second chances. America certainly gave Bill Clinton a second chance after the Monica Lewinsky scandal. Hillary Clinton, who was one of the most despised political figures in the nation following the *Hillarycare* debacle, now enjoys an astonishingly high public approval rating. A second presidential term for Barack Obama was certainly an example of a second chance, after his record of success in the first term was virtually non-existent.

Of course, what Democrats have working for them is a very supportive national media that has the influence to help

redeem people. Republicans aren't afforded that luxury.

In fact, the media is always eager to use a branding iron to immortalize the petty failings of Republican politicians. If you don't believe me, look at the legacy of Dan Quayle – a man whose entire career is defined by him misspelling a word. Next, look at the mind-numbingly extensive list of Joe Biden gaffes that the media frames as an endearing footnote in an otherwise distinguished career. 

A challenge for Republicans is to not let the liberal media define which candidates are viable and which ones aren't. In some cases they might be right, but it needs to be understood that their rationale for elevating and dismissing individuals comes with very little objectivity.

It's hard for me to accept that blowing some lines in a couple of debates, as Perry did, is enough to end one's presidential aspirations. It's not as if he made up some story about dodging sniper fire in Bosnia alongside comedian, Sinbad. It's certainly not as if he blamed a YouTube video for the death of four American patriots in Libya.

I, for one, would like to see Perry run again in 2016. I think he could surprise a lot of people and turn out to be a strong, independent-minded candidate. Part of me just wants to see him prove those who wrote his obituary four years ago wrong.

Then again, I could be the one who's wrong. Either way, I'm a believer in second chances.