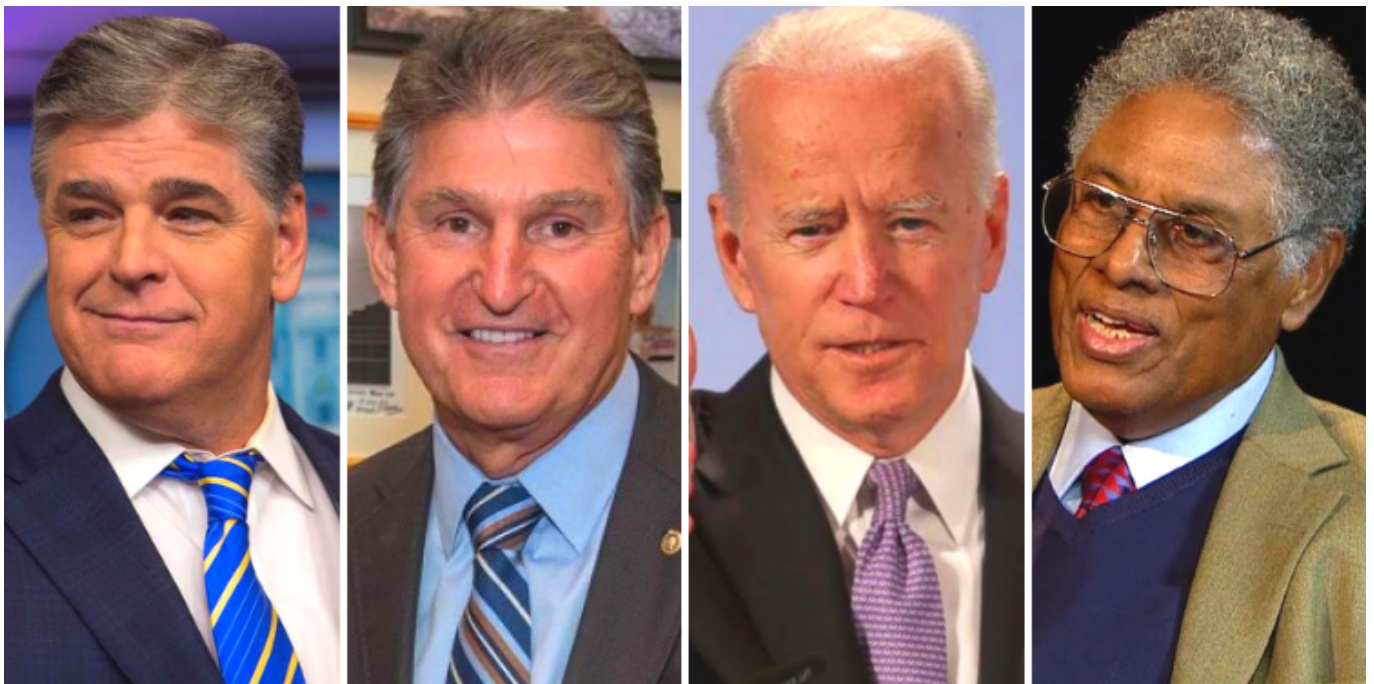


Bernie's Q&A: Sean Hannity & Seth Rich, Biden's appearance, Manchin, Sowell, and more! (5/17) – Premium Interactive (\$4 members)



Welcome to this week's **Premium Q&A** session for *Premium Interactive* members. I appreciate you all signing up and joining me. Thank you.

Let's get to your questions (and my answers):

Bernie, I am curious if you have met or appeared with either Thomas Sowell or Walter Williams. I have read many of their books and articles over the years and learned much from them. Much of my thinking was transformed and crystallized by Professor Sowell's book, "The Vision of the Anointed." Earlier today, in a comment to an article by Professor Williams, it

was suggested that the President award both of these scholars A Presidential Medal of Freedom. Are you able to weigh in on that and are you in a position to help us all out here lend our voices and support? – Michael F.

I was on the radio with Walter Williams a while back, when he was sitting in for Rush Limbaugh. I like him. And I'm a very big fan of Thomas Sowell. I'd be in favor of either or both of these men getting the Presidential Medal of Freedom.

Hi Bernie, after you wrote Bias did you expect a sort of sea change in how the media reported news or was your goal more to an expose the left wing media for who they actually are. Bias was a great book, thanks. – Mike G.

Thanks Mike. Bias – as an idea for a book – had been percolating in my head for quite a while. When I left CBS News I decided to try to actually write it. My goal was simply to say, This is how it is; this is how they operate. I wanted to take the reader behind the curtain. I expected nothing. Certainly not how popular the book became. Since Bias came out in 2001, things have gotten worse. Cable is one reason. But the most prestigious papers in America have also gotten worse. Nothing will change until they lose customers because of their bias. Here's the really bad news: The customer wants bias – as long as the bias validates his own bias.

Sir Bernard–Great minds think alike...as I often agree with your LOGICAL responses. My sense is you value your privacy, which I respect...but I would ask that you consider an opportunity where your most loyal fans (myself included) can meet you in the flesh, so to speak. Hopefully, from my brief profile, I come across as a reasonably sane and balanced human being. And THANK YOU for indulging me with my multi-question submissions. Be well, do good work, and keep in touch. BTW, are you or have you been a fan of Garrison Keillor's work? – Matthew Q.

I used to speak to audiences about my books – and in the process met all sorts of people ... not all fans, by the way.

Not sure how we would accomplish a get together ... I see practical logistical “issues.” But who knows, I may be somewhere and can let you all know and maybe some gathering could come of it. As for Garrison Keillor: There was something about the tone of his voice, the cadence of his speech, that didn’t connect with me. He sounded like a funeral director. Too calm for my taste. But hey, that’s on me, right?

Bernie, I’m a right wing guy, I make no bones about it. You often mention that bias is bias, and you are correct, guys like Hannity often states he’s not a journalist but a opinion guy, Fox News is touted as a right wing propaganda network. I disagree Hannity is up front about who he is, and in my opinion, does more investigative journalism than actual journalists! Over the past 2 years it seems like Fox has gotten stories right and everyone else got it wrong, also doesn’t the fact that they get more viewers than all cable news combined point to credibility? That’s why I believe Trump is correct labeling CNN fake news! Covington High School and Jesse Smollet just 2 examples! Your thoughts. – Ralph P.

Hey Ralph. I understand what you’re saying, but let me try to add a few thoughts for you to consider. My problem with opinion people on Fox and CNN and MSNBC isn’t that they give opinions instead of straight news facts. My problem is that they’re ideologues. Hannity and the others will praise Donald Trump for doing something that they’d condemn if Barack Obama or Hillary Clinton did the same thing. They’re not honest analysts. They’re sycophants who cover for Mr. Trump or Mr. Obama ... for liberals if they’re liberal hosts and for conservatives if they’re on Fox. They’ll tell you what you want to hear but they won’t act on principles. The real problem, for me anyway, is that it’s ok with a lot of the audience, an audience that wants their own views validated.

As for fake news: Donald Trump says journalists at times flat out make up sources, that they don't really exist. He's wrong 99.9 percent of the time. The president is playing you, Ralph. He's putting the idea of fake news in your head – and the heads of all his most passionate supporters – so that you won't believe negative news about him when it's true. All I ask is that you consider what I just wrote. Thanks.

Bernard. My question is long so I'll begin by apologizing for that.

Sean Hannity has shown that he'll say pretty much anything to defend his friend, President Trump, but I think his spreading of the Seth Rich conspiracy theory was probably the most disturbing example.

Hannity tormented the Rich family for weeks by using their murdered family member as a political pawn to provide an alternate/phony explanation for Russia's hacking of DNC e-mails. Hannity even embraced Julian Assange, who he once said (when Obama was president) should be arrested for declaring war on the U.S.

Mueller determined that Assange (arrested last month), did indeed fabricate the Rich story to draw suspicion away from Russia, who he was secretly working with. Being that Hannity lent Assange a huge television platform from which to spread that lie (which turned Assange into a hero of the MAGA people), one would think that Hannity would have suffered some professional consequences for the stunt.

That hasn't happened. Instead (as far as I can find) Hannity hasn't apologized or acknowledged responsibility for his role as an unwitting Russian asset who fed his audience weeks of Wikileaks/Russian propaganda. I doubt he even lost a single viewer over the fiasco. Its like it never even happened.

Who's to blame for this lack of accountability? Is it 100% his viewers (who couldn't care less)? Should Fox have penalized

him at some point, in some way? Thank you – James

Who's to blame? Let's start with Hannity, who as you correctly point out, will say pretty much anything to defend the president. Then let's go to Hannity's bosses, people who put the bottom line on the top of their list of concerns (though, as I recall, management did tell him to knock off the Seth Rich misinformation). Then there's the audience, that loves Trump and hates just about anyone who doesn't love Trump. It's a corrupt operation, James – and I'm not simply talking about opinion shows on *Fox*. The other outlets follow the same business model: Tell the audience what it wants to hear ... validate their biases ... give them red meat so that they'll come back for more.

Bernie: I have a theory of the American economy and economic/political perceptions I wanted to run by you. I have long struggled with the (mis)perception that the President is in charge of the U.S. economy, currently at \$20 Trillion. In my opinion, no one person, committee, The Fed, etc. is "in charge" of such a large, diverse and robust force. But Presidents clearly have influence over economic activity. So what's the explanation? My metaphor is that the economy is like a large river like the Mississippi. The President doesn't make it flow; that's ridiculous. The Mississippi is a huge and massive force that hurdles downriver on its own. However a President can keep it flowing unimpeded, keep it clean and unpolluted, make sure those using it do so responsibly and in coordination with each other. He/She can make sure the economic river doesn't flow out of its banks and ruin other objects in its path (externalities). So getting outside of my metaphor, when Obama weighed down the economy with regulations and restrictions, he caused a pitiful recovery after one of the worst recessions of the past 50 years. While Trump gets credit for deregulation and tax cuts, he gets demerits for these Chinese tariffs. Let's put to bed this notion that the President is in charge of the economy. The people in charge

are those huge, thick and willing participants in the daily exchange of goods and services (otherwise known as capitalism). You like my river analogy, or no? – Steve R.

Me Likey! I totally agree with you, Steve. I just told my barber a few days ago that no president is “in charge” of the economy. The real people who run the economy are businesspeople, big and small, and their customers. People like my barber. But, as you say, presidential policies can do things to keep the river running smoothly – or they can do things to muck it up. You nailed it, Steve.

What is your opinion of drivers who advertise the COEXIST bumper stickers? My personal opinion is that they are naive at best, and arrogant at worst for this reason: I may be wrong, but it always appeared to me that the bumper stickers are NOT aimed at addressing the ones who actually SHOULD take the attitude that we need to COEXIST with one another. As another bumper sticker reads: “I can’t coexist with people who want to KILL ME!” Your thoughts are appreciated. Best Regards–The Emperor

Look at it this way, Emperor: The original COEXIST bumper stickers represent 3 major religions: Christianity, Judaism and Islam. The greater of the bumper sticker was simply sending out a hopeful message that we should all live side by side peacefully. You can’t possibly be against that, right? The message is aimed at everybody. Is it a tad idealistic. Sure. So? You think the message is aimed at you – and you don’t need the pep talk, the other guy does. Emperor, we’re polarized enough already. Let it be.

Last Sunday I heard Mark Levin’s program at 10 on Fox. He had a guest who was a constitutional prosecutor who outlined unequivocally why Trump did not commit obstruction. Did you hear his program and what do you think?? I don’t feel he obstructed the investigation because he asked McGann to talk with Rosenstein about firing Mueller because he had a conflict

of interest. – Jeffrey W.

I did not see the program, Jeffrey, but I have some thoughts on your question. Mark Levin is a smart man but every week he has people on who agree with him; people who say the kind of things Fox viewers want to hear. You tell me: Has he ever had anyone on who had a view contrary to his? Has he ever had a liberal on who told him something he hadn't considered? Do you think he wants to have an interesting conversation or just feed the viewer what the viewer wants to consume? CNN and MSNBC are just as bad. I'm worn out by all of them, though, in fairness, Levin does have interesting people on his show.

Is it my imagination (I doubt it) or has Joe Biden had plastic surgery recently? He looks stretched out and gaunt and older. I just saw some older pictures of him with President Obama and the smile lines, wrinkles and fullness are more appealing. Or is this something you're not supposed to notice or talk about? He was open about his hair plugs, wasn't he? – John F.

According to an April 28th story in the Daily Mail: "Former Vice President Joe Biden has undergone numerous cosmetic procedures to alter his appearance, including Botox, hair transplants, and dental work, plastic surgeons say.

"Surgeons say that Biden, 76, who polls show is the front runner in the race for the Democratic nomination for president, began to look noticeably different during the 2008 campaign."

So you're onto something John. The article concludes with this: "Biden has never confirmed undergoing any of the procedures, nor has he spoken about his appearance publicly."

Hi Bernie, I dislike when people complain about things without offering solutions, so never do so myself. A few years ago I came up with some solutions to what I consider to be the nation's biggest problems. For example I determined, following a root cause analysis, that the biggest problem we have is how

few people understand our own economic system. Aware that there are hundreds of museums in DC dedicated to everything from art, to spying to space, and even to news, but none to our system of economics, I outlined a plan for a Museum of Capitalism where parents could take their kids and learn about the prosperity and innovation that free markets bring. (and maybe some politicians, commentators, and journalists too) Recently, I have added to the 'problem list' the attacks on due process and free speech – not by government – but by campus mobs, censorship by tech companies, and social media police. But I wanted to ask your opinion about the other 'new problem': incompetence in journalism. I was in the automotive business and obviously familiar with the ISO-9000 standards to assure quality and wondered if there were journalism standards developed by an independent non-governmental body like ISO and a monitoring system. It sure seems that the business of journalism is lacking in standards and accountability. – Michael E.

[Here's a link](#) to the standards put out by the Society of Professional Journalists.

But, and forgive me for stating the obvious ... No one goes to journalism jail if they don't follow the rules, which aren't really rules, but guidelines.

Hello again, Mr. Goldberg! Last time I asked you a question regarding citizen journalists and cited a pair of examples, though I am more interested in the concept of them than the examples themselves. This week I would like to ask you about taxpayer funded media (ex. BBC in UK, and SVT on TV and SR on the radio in my country of origin, Sweden). Is this concept good or bad? Why/why not? – Carl-Simon Pihl

I'm not a fan of tax funded media, Carl-Simon. I understand that in theory the journalists are not beholden to their benefactor – the federal government. But what if the news organization displays biases against either Democrats or

Republicans. Will there be retaliation by the offended party? Maybe. Even if there isn't, journalists should be free to cover government without wondering if the government they're covering will cut off their funds. I know it works in other countries. And I realize that the U.S. government funds, to some extent, NPR and PBS. I just don't like it.

What is your opinion of the Better Angels Nonprofit Organization that is attempting to help unify (or depolarize) the country? – Ival S.

Their heart is in the right place. Anything that might unify or depolarize the country is worth a try. But I'm not Pollyanna. It may be asking too much for the organization to have much influence on our deeply divided country. But like chicken soup, it couldn't hurt.

Bernie: What is your perspective on the issue of guns, the second amendment and related issues. Does the right to bear arms really protect us in this modern age? – William W.

The Supreme Court has decided that Americans have the right to have guns. I have no problem with that. In fact, I believe the bumper sticker notion that if the government outlawed guns only outlaws would have guns. But in the past when I've written that all rights come with limitations – including the First Amendment – so you have no right to have a surface-to-air missile in your backyard, I've heard from gun people who were not happy with me; they believe that limitations are nothing more than a slippery slope. People have a right to protect themselves, they have a right to have guns, but there are limits, as I say – and if they're reasonable, I have no problem with them. Of course, what I think is reasonable may not be what the other guy thinks is reasonable.

Mr. Goldberg, Like you, I believe that the news media should provide us the truth, the whole truth and nothing but the truth. Which is why I am so appalled – and presume you are,

too – by how the biased media have for so long gotten away with hiding from the American people the real story about all these “no fly zones” our government has been creating in foreign lands. Every one of them is in a country whose leaders hate America – yet we do for them something truly wonderful that we don’t do for our own country. You and I and our fellow Americans have to swat flies – yet our tax dollars are enabling people living under the rule of some of our worst sworn enemies not to have to. There’s no area in America that is off limit to flies, right? But at our cost foreign adversaries enjoy huge spaces where their people are guaranteed never to be bothered by flies. You can be sure these despots are taking the credit for eliminating the menace of flies; they sure aren’t telling their people to be grateful to America.

Two questions:

1. Why do you think the media never ask presidential or congressional candidates to state a position on this important issue?
2. As someone with such an abundance of awards for insightful reporting and such a well deserved reputation for sound thinking and great analysis, do you have any suggestions for how we the people might be able to arouse public opinion enough to put an end to this disgraceful practice?

You’re funny. Ever think of going pro?

To follow up on your response regarding the positive qualities of Joe Manchin in the “truth to power” question posed last week, I’ve often thought that he leans Republican regarding his support of the Kavanaugh confirmation and his support of fossil fuels in his coal rich state. Have you heard any conjecture regarding the possibility of him switching parties? What is your opinion on this topic? He clearly does not fit the vision of the ultra liberals who now run the Democratic

Party. – Ken M.

He should switch parties and I keep hoping he will. But I don't think it'll happen. He's a lifelong Democrat and a switch to the other side wouldn't be easy for him. But you're right, Ken, he clearly does not fit the vision of the lefties who run the Democratic Party. Maybe someday he'll get fed up with their left-wing nonsense. One can hope, right?

Bernie, I think that "Unreported News" (for lack of a better term) has long been more of a problem with news reporting than "Fake News". For example stories like Fast & Furious, Benghazi, or the IRS and VA scandals during the Obama administration as well as the classified email abuse, etc... during Hillary's campaign I'd often see first on Fox News or on conservative websites, and then updated regularly. At the same time CNN, MSNBC, the Big 3 nightly news broadcasts along with the major newspapers would seem to only grudgingly and briefly report on, or in some cases outright ignore, such a subject until it came to a point they no longer could and had to give it the coverage it deserved. I realize that it goes both ways; that Fox News et al. tend not to harp on Republican or Trump's controversies, missteps and failures. Do you have any thoughts on news organizations ignoring or underreporting news they think could hurt "their side" of the political spectrum? – Barry R.

I'm glad you added that last thought, Barry ... about how it goes both ways. Because it does. You're absolutely right that unreported news is a bigger problem than so-called fake news. It's not only a form of bias, it's journalistic corruption. It's most obvious in the cable news business – the key word being "business." Because that's why it happens: Money. As I've said many times before, it's about giving the audience what it wants to hear. And, to your question, NOT giving the audience what it doesn't want to hear.

Facebook continues to silence/ban conservative thought under

the “they’re breaking our rules of conduct” excuse which apparently consists of posting non liberal viewpoints. All the while vile liberal posts continue with impunity. My question, when do you think the FCC will step in and treat it like any other public communication forum? Hold it’s feet to the fire. If ever..... – John M.

As much as I’m against silencing voices social media sites don’t like, I’m against the federal government stepping in.

I’m probably in the minority on this, but I see these companies as purveyors of information not unlike old school newspapers. The NY Times, for example, can ban any voices it chooses to. It can publish letters to the editor only from liberals. They can ban conservative voices on the editorial page. It’s not good, but the government has no right to “fix” the problem. But, as always, I can be wrong – especially about this because I’m not a social media guy.

Mr. G, In view of the biases and misleading reporting by pretty much every medium, except a select few, where is one to go for simply honest and objective news? I read the WSJ and enjoy most of their paper, but it is limited news for the most part. So, any recommendations? – Terry J.

It’s a good question, Terry, and the best I can offer is to go to more than one place for news. If you like the WSJ then check out the NYT also. The problem, of course, is that too often bias creeps into hard news reporting. Sometimes it shows up by what the paper doesn’t cover. (See an exchange between Barry and me above.) I’ve said before that on TV, I like Special Report on Fox. I think they’re straight shooters.

Is William Barr the only adult in the room? – William W.

It sure looks that way, William.

Thanks, everyone! You can send me questions for next week **using the form below!** You can also read previous Q&A sessions by [clicking here](#).

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