

Dems Dilemma: Hard to Live With Bernie ... and Hard to Live Without Him

Bernie Sanders finished first in New Hampshire, as predicted, and Republicans are salivating over the possibility that he will win his party's nomination. He can't win in November, they say. No way the American people will vote for someone playing deep left field.

New Hampshire and Iowa, after all, are hardly microcosms of the whole United States.

And there's some serious academic research to back up the idea that if Bernie is seen as too extreme, he won't be able to muster enough support to defeat the president.

Two political scientists from Stanford, Andrew Hall and Daniel Thompson, tell the New York Times that, "We have found consistent evidence that extremist nominees do poorly in general elections in large part because they skew turnout in the general election away from their own party and in favor of the opposing party."

But Democrats may have an even bigger problem than a backlash against a candidate many Americans will see as out of the mainstream of American politics. They may be in trouble not only if Bernie wins the nomination ... but also if he doesn't win the nomination.

Here's why:

A recent poll by Emerson College asked this question: "Will you vote for the Democratic nominee even if it is not your candidate?"

Eighty-seven percent of Joe Biden supporters say yes, they'll

support the Democratic nominee even if it isn't Biden.

Eighty-six percent of Pete Buttigieg supporters say they'll support the nominee even if it isn't Mayor Pete.

Ninety percent of Elizabeth Warren supporters say they'll support the party's nominee even if it isn't Warren.

But only 53 percent of Bernie Sanders supporters say they'll vote for the Democratic nominee if it isn't Bernie. Sixteen percent of Bernie's fans flat out say they will not vote for any other Democratic nominee ... and 31 percent are on the fence.

Those are the kind of numbers that keep Democrats up at night – because if they lose Bernie's Army they'll have a tough time winning the war in November.

Now back to the other problem facing Sanders and his party: What if Biden drops out and Buttigieg fades, and Globuchar and Bloomberg don't catch on, and Bernie actually wins the nomination?

Bernie, the argument goes, will alienate too many mainstream voters, given his break-the-bank progressive agenda.

“The risk for his supporters and the Democratic Party is that Bernie's platform is the most explicitly left-wing since at least Henry Wallace in 1948,” as the Wall Street Journal editorial puts it. “He wants to nationalize health insurance, eliminating 170 million private policies. He wants a \$16.3 trillion Green New Deal and a \$2.5 trillion housing plan, to include national rent control. He wants to cancel \$1.6 trillion in student debt and ban fracking. He wants a ‘wealth tax’ on individual net worth, with rates up to 8% a year. He wants a federal law saying workers can't be fired without ‘just cause.’”

This is precisely why Republicans are praying Sanders wins the

nomination. Only the hard left could love such an agenda.

But if Bernie doesn't get the nomination ... what happens then? Will his zealous supporters think the establishment rigged the system (again) to make sure he lost?

Will they hold their nose and support the party nominee ... or will they pout and sit home on Election Day?

Even Bernie doesn't have the answers.

Donald Trump may have a good time calling Sanders a socialist, and even a communist. But that may not be enough to solidify Bernie's defeat, not when so many Democrats detest this president.

So before Republicans throw a party if Bernie is nominated, they might want to remember that not that long ago Democrats threw a party too ... when Donald Trump was nominated.