**Why We Should Listen To Bernie Sanders**

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You may have heard of him for skyrocketing in the polls, or being the only real challenger to Hillary’s coronation, or even his crazy socialist plan to turn America away from capitalism and embrace China’s oppressive economic system. Even though he describes himself as a democratic socialist, Bernie Sanders does not want to shun capitalism nor make the United States look like China. His plan for America is based on the economic systems in many prosperous, capitalist countries around the world (Denmark, Finland, Sweden, and Norway), and would work here.

The first part of his plan is to bring a single-payer healthcare system (where the government acts as the insurer) to the United States. Critics of this system believe it would be too costly. On September 14, 2015, The Wall Street Journal ran a piece decrying Bernie Sanders’ plan for that reason.⁠1 They cited Gerald Friedman, an economist at the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, in claiming that a single-payer health care system would require $15 trillion in additional federal government spending over 10 years. What the Wall Street Journal failed to include from Mr. Friedman’s research is that the country, as a whole, would save $5 trillion over 10 years by switching to a single-payer system, which he addressed in “An Open Letter to the Wall Street Journal on Its Bernie Sanders Hit Piece”.⁠2 Not only would we save money by "reducing administrative waste, lowering pharmaceutical and device prices, and lowering the rate of medical inflation", but we would also ensure that nobody won't be able to see a doctor because they can’t afford it, and we would achieve universal healthcare coverage. Also, the American people would be able to spend their money stimulating their local economy, instead of having some mega insurance corp take it every month. In addition, companies operating in the United States would have lower costs because they wouldn’t have to pay for health insurance for their employees.⁠3 Another benefit would be that individuals would no longer be forced to stay with their employer for health benefits. In California in 2002, 179,000 people wished to switch employers, but couldn’t due to their health care benefits, representing $772 million in lost productivity. According to PolitiFact, the United States is the only advanced country without universal coverage and its benefits.⁠4

In addition to guaranteeing health care for all Americans, Bernie Sanders wants to make tuition at public colleges free. In Finland, Denmark, Ireland, Iceland, Norway, Sweden, Mexico, and Germany, this is already the case.⁠5 This would encourage students from families that can not afford the skyrocketing costs of tuition to apply to college and work hard at school. It would also correct the current injustice that you can only get a good education if you are wealthy. Students would be able to leave college debt-free and not forever have to make payments on their student loans, and the economy would benefit from a more-educated workforce. To fund this, Senator Sanders has proposed a 0.5% tax on stock trades, a 0.1% tax on bond trades, and a 0.005% tax on derivative trades. He has already introduced legislation to make this a reality, Senate Bill 1373. Contrary to claims by some pundits of certain economic destruction if this bill were passed, many countries around the world already have such a tax. The UK imposes a 0.5% tax on purchases of securities, and 39 other countries impose a financial transaction tax as well.⁠6

Bernie Sanders also wants to stop big bankers from acting with impunity. He plans to do so by jailing those who have committed crimes after the 2008 bailout and breaking up banks that are too big to fail. “If a bank is too big to fail, it is too big to exist”, in Bernie Sanders' words.⁠7 He's right. Banks that are too big to fail will engage in risky behavior that has a chance to bring the bank down, because they know that the government has to bail them out to prevent the collapse of the whole banking system. Bernie Sanders has already introduced Senate Bill 1206 that would direct the Secretary of the Treasury to compile a Too Big To Fail List of banks that are "systemically important" and whose "failure would cause a catastrophic effect on the United States or global economy without a taxpayer bailout." Capitalism would be allowed to run its course and banks that wish to engage in risky behavior will have potential failure as a disincentive. Hillary Clinton’s plan merely gives regulators the power to determine that a particular bank engages in too risky behavior and to demand its breakup. It is an easy cop-out and would not result in any change. The Obama administration had the power to send bankers to jail, as they were in other countries, but that failed to happen. Wall Street is just too powerful. Arguing against Sanders' plan to break up the banks in the CNN Democratic debate, Hillary Clinton said, "I represented Wall Street, as a senator from New York, and I went to Wall Street in December of 2007 — before the big crash that we had — and I basically said, 'cut it out! Quit foreclosing on homes! Quit engaging in these kinds of speculative behaviors.'"⁠8 Obviously, that didn't work, and she shouldn't expect it to work the second time around. Wall Street evidently doesn't believe she would crack down on them either. Over her career, four out of the five top employers for the largest contributors to her campaign have been Wall Street banks according to the Center for Responsive Politics.⁠9 These individuals would not invest their money into someone that would break their company up.

Despite his claims that he is a democratic socialist, Bernie Sanders has never suggested anything close to full socialism (defined as the collective ownership of the means of production).⁠10 Instead, he wants to implement the Nordic model in the United States. The Nordic Model is what is in place in Denmark, Sweden, Finland, Iceland, and Norway, countries that regularly top lists of the world's happiest countries.⁠11 The Nordic model is a system where free market capitalism can operate, but is restricted so that everyone can have some share of its benefits. It is this society that voters choose when they vote for Bernie Sanders in their Democratic primary.

1 Laura Meckler, "Price Tag of Bernie Sanders’s Proposals: $18 Trillion," last modified September 14, 2015, accessed October 14, 2015, http://www.wsj.com/articles/price­tag­of­bernie­sanders­proposals­18­trillion­1442271511.

2 Gerald Friedman, "An Open Letter to the Wall Street Journal on Its Bernie Sanders Hit Piece," last modified September 15, 2015, accessed October 17, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/gerald­friedman/the­wall­street­journal­k\_b\_8143062.html.

3 Behzad Mohit, "Universal Health Care Can Save Our Economy and Keep 1.7 million Jobs in the U.S.: Part III," last modified May 25, 2011, accessed October 22, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/dr­behzad­mohit/universal­health­care­can\_b\_201154.html.

4 Jon Greenburg, "Bernie Sanders: U.S. 'only major country' that doesn't guarantee right to health care," Politifact, last modified June 29, 2015, accessed October 19, 2015, http://www.politifact.com/truth­o­meter/statements/2015/jun/29/bernie­s/bernie­sanders­us­only­major­country­doesnt­guaran/.

5 Bernie Sanders, "Make college free for all," Washington Post, last modified October 22, 2015, accessed October 23, 2015, https://www.washingtonpost.com/opinions/bernie­sanders­america­needs­free­college­now/2015/10/22/a3d05512­7685­11e5­bc80­9091021aeb69\_story.html.

6 Stephany Griffith­Jones, "Why critics are wrong about a financial­transaction tax," last modified May 19, 2014, accessed October 18, 2015, http://www.politico.eu/article/why­critics­are­wrong­about­a­financial­transaction­tax/.

7 Manny Schewitz, "Bernie Sanders: “Too Big To Fail Banks Are Too Big To Exist” Read more at: http://www.forwardprogressives.com/bernie­sanders­too­big­to­fail­banks­are­too­big­to­exist/," last modified May 21, 2015, accessed October 18, 2015, http://www.forwardprogressives.com/bernie­sanders­too­big­to­fail­banks­are­too­big­to­exist/.

8 CNN, "CNN Democratic Debate – Full Transcript," last modified October 13, 2015, accessed October 18, 2015, http://cnnpressroom.blogs.cnn.com/2015/10/13/cnn­democratic­debate­full­transcript/.

9 Center for Responsive Politics, "Hillary Clinton," Opensecrets.org, accessed October 22, 2015, https://www.opensecrets.org/politicians/summary.php?cycle=Career&cid=N00000019.

10 "Socialism," in Merriam­Webster, [Page #], accessed October 23, 2015, http://www.merriam­webster.com/dictionary/socialism.

11 Brodwin, Erin. "The Happiest Countries in the World, According to Neuroscientists, Statisticians, and Economists." Business Insider. Business Insider, Inc, 23 Apr. 2015. Web. 8 Nov. 2015.