
Bernie Sanders for Congress

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October 10, 1999

Dear Friend,

As Vermont's Representative, and as the only Independent in Congress, I am writing to ask for your help in my 2000 campaign.

Ever since my victory in 1990, when I became the first Independent elected to Congress in 40 years, I have run for re-election against well-financed opponents who have received substantial help from the National Republican Party, corporate America, the NRA and a wide variety of right-wing interests.

As an Independent, and founder of the 53 member House Progressive Caucus, I do not receive financial help from any political party and do not accept money from corporations or Big Money interests. I have been able to win re-election because citizens throughout the country—people who share my commitment to social justice and environmental sanity—have helped provide the necessary funding to put together a strong and effective Vermont grass roots movement.

As you may know, a recent poll found me slightly ahead of Vermont's Republican Senator, James Jeffords, and I have indicated publicly that I am giving thought to running for the U.S. Senate. I am currently assessing, with the help of Vermonters and progressives throughout the state, whether it would be in the best interest of the goals for which we're fighting to run for re-election to the House or make a run for the Senate.

In any case, no matter what that decision may be and no matter what seat I seek, **I can expect vigorous opposition from Big Money interests both in Vermont and throughout the country.** The insurance companies, the pharmaceutical industry, the military-industrial complex, the banking industry and those special interests who receive billions in corporate welfare and unfair tax breaks will regard the 2000 election as "payback" time for the legislation that I've offered and the fights that I've led.

Whether I run for re-election to the House or run for the Senate, let me briefly mention to you some of the key issues for the 2000 campaign:

- **We must make the economy work for all the people, not just the wealthy.** Despite all the media hype about the "booming" economy, the average American is working longer hours for lower wages than was the case in 1973. The U.S. today has the most unfair distribution of wealth in the industrialized world with the richest one percent now owning more wealth than the bottom 95 percent, and CEOs now earning 400 times more than factory workers. Almost 20% of our children live in poverty, and 44 million Americans lack health insurance. What kind of "boom" is that?
- **We must re-invigorate American democracy and pass strong campaign finance reform.** The U.S. now has, by far, the lowest voter-turnout of any major democracy.

The vast majority of low and moderate income citizens do not participate in the political process, nor do they have faith in either the Republican or Democratic parties—and the disillusionment is getting worse. (In the 1998 election, only 18% of young people under 24 voted). **We must accept the enormously difficult challenge of bringing working people and young people into the political struggle, so that we can effectively defeat the Big Money interests who dominate our political and economic systems.**

- **We must protect and expand our domestic “safety net” against a ferocious right-wing assault.** Social Security is not in “crisis,” and with modest changes can be easily extended for a 75 year period. **We must join the rest of the industrialized world and establish a national health care system—guaranteeing health care for all.** It is unconscionable to be passing, as Congress recently did, huge tax breaks for the rich and massive increases in military spending, while so many Americans are struggling with the basic necessities of life.
- **We must protect the individual rights of all Americans.** We must redouble our efforts to protect a woman’s right to choose, support affirmative action, and combat discrimination against minorities, people with disabilities, and the gay community.
- **We must move aggressively against the continued degradation of our environment.** We cannot continue to see our family farms turned into parking lots and subdivisions, and genetically-engineered food replace wholesome, naturally produced food. Clean air, clean water and healthy food are basic rights. **Corporate greed cannot be allowed to destroy the environment in this country, or throughout the world.**
- **We must develop a new “global architecture.”** As we enter the 21st century, it is unacceptable that highly secretive institutions like the IMF and World Bank continue to protect the interests of multi-national corporations, while they weaken democracy and lower the standard of living for hundreds of millions of people in the developing world. According to the United Nations, in about 100 developing countries incomes today are lower in real terms than they were a decade or more ago.

And these are just a few of the issues that we have to address!

Clearly, there is an enormous amount of work to do in Congress and throughout grass-roots America. Let’s go forward together. **Please make a check to “Sanders for Congress,” and send it off in the enclosed envelope.**

I hope you enjoy the new edition of the “Sanders Scoop.”

Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
Member of Congress

P.S. Please check out our website: www.bernie.org.