

ACTON INSTITUTE POWERBLOG

Bernie Sanders, AOC would ‘cure’ COVID-19 with ‘short-term’ socialism

by REV. BEN JOHNSON • April 9, 2020



California Governor Gavin Newsom raised eyebrows last week when he **told** Bloomberg News that he sees the global coronavirus pandemic as an “opportunity” for “reimagining a progressive era as it pertains to capitalism.” As if to flesh out this notion Bernie Sanders, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, and socialists on both sides of the Atlantic have unveiled multi-trillion-dollar programs suggesting that the best antidote to COVID-19 is short-term socialism.

Sanders' operatives made one last push to breathe life into his presidential campaign by promoting his “Emergency Response to the Coronavirus Pandemic.” His platform would seize upon the coronavirus to radically empower the federal government to regiment the economic life of the American people.



Joe Calvello

@the_vello

NEWS>>>Bernie calls for the boldest legislation ever written in modern history.

NEWS: Sanders Releases Priorities for Next Coronavirus Stimulus Package

Calls for Boldest Legislation Ever Written in Modern History

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Contact: press@berniesanders.com

BURLINGTON, Vt. – Sen. Bernie Sanders on Friday released a list of priorities to ensure the next coronavirus legislation passed by Congress is the boldest legislation in history, matches the scale of the crisis, saves lives and ensures working Americans are not left behind.

“We are in the midst of a COVID-19 pandemic that could lead to the death of hundreds of thousands of Americans and infect millions of others, and we are entering an economic downturn that could be worse than the Great Depression of the 1930s.” Sanders said. “In this unprecedented moment in modern American history, it is imperative that we respond in an unprecedented way. That means that Congress must pass, in the very near future, the boldest piece of legislation ever written in modern history. Today, I am outlining a set of six core provisions that must be included in new Congressional legislation to support working people during this horrific crisis.”

Sanders' priorities include:

- Keep workers on payroll - make sure that every worker in America continues to receive their paycheck, retroactive to the beginning of the crisis. An important precedent was set by keeping airline workers on payroll in the last bill
- Use Medicare to make sure no one has to pay for health care during the crisis
- A \$2,000 monthly emergency payment to every person in the country until the crisis has passed
- The forceful use of the Defense Production Act to direct the production of all of the personnel protective equipment, ventilators and other medical supplies
- Hazard pay for workers on the frontlines of the emergency
- \$600 billion in direct fiscal aid to states and cities
- Freezing monthly rent and mortgage payments

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Sanders' plan calls for taxpayers to “cover all health care treatment” for all U.S. residents—not merely coronavirus-related healthcare and not merely for U.S. citizens—“for free.”

No one will be laid off, because the federal government will “provide direct payroll costs for small and medium sized businesses to keep workers employed until this crisis has passed.” Furthermore, anyone

who “needs to stay home” during this time will remain employed at full salary. However, should someone manage to lose a job, unemployment insurance will pay 100 percent of wages up to \$75,000 a year for everyone, including the self-employed.

On top of remaining employed with no salary reduction, every American will receive an additional \$2,000 a month.

The plan **cancel**s all **student loan debt** and makes all colleges and trade schools “**free**.” No foreclosures or utility disconnects would take place, regardless of the reason bills were not paid. His plan also contains a provision allowing the government to seize “**empty** or vacant lodging”—a proposal **introduced** by then-British Labour Party leader Jeremy Corbyn in 2018.

In essence, this would enroll all Americans in an allegedly temporary Medicare for All, Jobs for All, College for All, Housing for All, and Universal Basic Income.

“We must respond to this unprecedented challenge with the boldest measures,” **said** Sanders’ campaign co-chair Nina Turner. In the progressive thesaurus, “boldest” is a synonym for “most expensive.” Sanders’ allies say this will cost **\$2 trillion**, but less sympathetic sources place the price tag closer to **\$10 trillion** or **\$18 trillion** a year.

The senator’s fellow travelers have repeated his call for socialize the economy as a “temporary” measure. Last month, Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez **told** *The Intercept*’s podcast that lawmakers need to focus on providing “things like mortgage and rent and student loan debt moratoriums, making sure that we’re getting cash into people’s hands, ensuring” that anyone who receives medical care will be “financially okay.” She concluded that “we need both debt moratorium and universal basic income right now.”

Clearly, “bold” plans do not require creative or innovative thinking. If these proposals sound **familiar**, they should. They have long been planks in the platform of Sanders and his confederates on the Left, which they roll out in response to every crisis.

AOC included many of these components in her Green New Deal, which she **described** as a “wartime-level, just economic mobilization plan” to fight an allegedly **apocalyptic crisis**. The congresswoman’s former chief of staff proved more forthcoming. Saikat Chakrabarti **confessed** to *The Washington Post* that AOC’s office did not consider the sweeping economic plan an environmental policy at all. “We really think of it as a how-do-you-change-the-entire-economy thing,” he said.

His admission provides a vital insight: The “crisis” is only a selling point for a broader, deeper, and more centralizing agenda. Its components, determined long in advance, can be molded to the necessities of the moment. Widespread fear and deferral to experts empowers statist to ram through a realignment they know will prove permanent, because “temporary” federal programs so rarely remain temporary. (Indeed, national emergencies often **take on** a life of their own.)

The CDC itself is a case in point. The federal agency was **founded** on July 1, 1946, to fight malaria in the American South. “As the organization took root deep in the South, once known as the heart of the malaria zone, CDC Founder Dr. Joseph Mountin continued to advocate for public health issues and to push for CDC to extend its responsibilities to other communicable diseases,” the CDC’s website states.

Some statesmen warned about the threat bureaucratic mission creep poses to liberty. “No government ever voluntarily reduces itself in size. Government programs, once launched, never disappear,” **said** Ronald Reagan. “Actually, a government bureau is the nearest thing to eternal life we’ll ever see on this earth!”

Thus, the Left’s desire to capitalize on the emergency, which is at work on both sides of the Atlantic. Tim Worstall of the UK-based Adam Smith Institute **writes**:

There are armies out there, all waving the little plans they've long had and insisting they are the solution to this specific problem. One example being

John McDonnell:

We pay for it by introducing an immediate windfall tax on the banks and finance sector that we bailed out when they brought about the crisis more than a decade ago. Combining this with a wealth tax on the richest within our society and a tax on multinationals, we can demonstrate – just as the current government has demonstrated – that when we need the resources, they can always be found.

*Coronavirus here is simply an excuse for McDonnell would recommend those three sets of taxation to cure hangnails. The same is true of the latest [Emmanuel] Saez and [Gabriel] Zucman **proposal**:*

This column proposes the creation of a progressive, time-limited, European-wide progressive wealth tax assessed on the net worth of the top 1% richest individuals.

Saez and Zucman have been proposing a progressive wealth tax to solve such minor problems as Elizabeth Warren's political career. Coronavirus is again just an excuse to hang it upon.

Perhaps the most benign construction one can put on the Left's promoting the same platform in response to every crisis is that we are creatures of habit, an endorsement of **Burkean conservatism**. However, there is more at work.

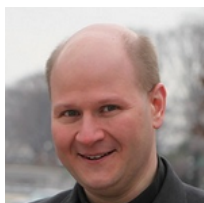
Democratic socialists advance the same "solutions" to every catastrophe in part because they are economic determinists. They believe that if society dismantles the putatively unjust structures of modern capitalism, peace inevitably ensues. Fix the ownership of private goods, they argue, and you fix everything.

The Judeo-Christian tradition holds that the human person cannot be reduced to economic inputs. Both the **Hebrew** and **Christian** Scriptures teach that "man does not live by bread alone." God created human beings for **liberty**, without which they cannot

exercise their higher calling to live out their own destiny. America’s Founding Fathers so understood this that they **wrote** into our foundational documents the truth that people “are, and of right ought to be free.”

To enable this liberty, God gave human persons a variety of gifts. The most necessary at this critical juncture in our national history are the wisdom to find a cure to a pandemic, the creativity to respond to an emergency without destroying our economic life, and the prudence not to hand the government “temporary” authority that will never be rescinded.

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REV. BEN JOHNSON

Rev. Ben Johnson is Executive Editor of the Acton Institute's flagship journal Religion & Liberty and edits its transatlantic website.

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