

[MUSIC PLAYING]

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** Well, good evening. Good evening, and welcome to tonight's conversation on Jeff Weaver's new book, *How Bernie Won*. I'm Susan Moffitt, the director of the Taubman Center for American Politics and Policy. Welcome. So glad to see you all here tonight and welcome to our friends and colleagues in our overflow rooms, we will not forget about you.

The Taubman Center focuses its programming on three themes. The cost of living, the value of democracy, and the price of security. And tonight marks the beginning of our series on elections, which is part of our programming on American democracy. And we're glad to have Jeff Weaver here with us to launch this series with us this year. Bernie Sanders has described Jeff's book in the following way. "Only Jeff could bring to life the story of the inner workings of the historic 2016 democratic primary from an insurgent effort to the national mass movement it became. He was there with me at the heart of it."

So we look forward to hearing much more about that tonight, Jeff. Thank you. Jeff began working with Bernie Sanders in 1986. He formerly served as the campaign manager for Sanders 2006 United States Senate election, and as a chief of staff for Sanders house and Senate offices.

He was the campaign manager for Bernie Sanders 2016 campaign, of course, and he graduated from the University of Vermont and Georgetown Law School. And last, but not least, he is the owner and operator of Victory Comics in Falls Church, Virginia. We hope that you will find a way to talk with us about that this evening as well. Jeffrey, glad you could join us.

And moderating tonight's conversation is professor Jim Morone, who is the John Hazen White Professor of Public Policy and Professor of Political Science and Urban Studies here at Brown University. Jim is the author of 10 books and more than 150 articles, reviews, and essays on American political history, US health policy, and social policy. Jim's first book, *The Democratic Wish*, was named a notable book of 1991 by The New York Times and won the American Political Science Association's Kammerer award for the best book on US national policy.

His book, *Hellfire Nation the Politics of Sin*, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize, and I hear rumors that there's another book in the works. We look forward to hearing about that at another time too, Jim. Thanks for moderating tonight.

So our time together will unfold in the following way. Jeff will begin with about a 20 minute overview of some of the key themes in the book. He and Jim will then engage in conversation for about another 20 minutes, and then we'll open up the floor to your questions. Those of you in the overflow room, we will not forget you. If you have a question, please let the person in the room who's waving their hand right now know. That person text the question down to us and we'll make sure that your questions are part of our conversation tonight.

And then after our conversation we hope that we will continue it out in the foyer for a book signing reception with Jeff Weaver. Now will you please all join me in very warmly welcoming Jeff Weaver.

[APPLAUSE]

**JEFF WEAVER:** Thank you very much for that kind introduction. I appreciate it. And thanks all of you for coming out tonight. This is a really important moment in American politics, American history, and I hear that all the time. This is the most important election of our lifetime, but we are engaged in a period where we are engaged in the most important political time of our-- at least in my lifetime-- some of you may be a hair older than I am, despite how I look. I'm sure there's a couple of people here who are older than I am.

I wanted to begin-- I often begin this way at these meetings because I want to sort of put the race in 2015 and 2016 in a historical context. Nothing happens outside of that context, and it's important to understand our race and what it represented in the course of American political history and in the course of the history of the modern Democratic Party.

The modern Democratic Party was born in the New Deal era of FDR, and the New Deal policies that he promulgated. And if you read my book, and you don't have to read my book to get this, you can find it online. But in 1944, at the end of the war, FDR delivered his final State of the Union address in which he outlined the unfinished business of the New Deal and really the unfinished business of the modern Democratic Party. And to the extent that the Democratic Party pursued this agenda over the course of the next few decades, it was the dominant party in American politics.

And when it abandoned the quest for these goals, it slipped for power nationally, and 2015 and 2016 was really an attempt by the grassroots of the party to recapture that legacy that

was begun by FDR and carried forward by Democrats thereafter. And so I want to read to you this 1944 State of the Union by FDR. I should tell you that my publisher told me not to put it in the book.

He said, these single-spaced long quotations, no one's going to read them, no one's going to care. And I said, look, if anybody reads anything in this book, they should read this because this is what the campaign was all about. And it's not only what you recognize the policy platform that FDR lays out, but there are very precious warnings that are very relevant to politics today. So I'd like to start by reading this. It's not that it's not that long, and this crowd I'm sure we'll be able to tolerate the page and a half of quotation.

This is FDR, 1944. "It is our duty now to begin to lay the plans and determine the strategy for the winning of a lasting peace and the establishment of an American standard of living higher than ever before known. We cannot be content, no matter how high that general standard of living may be, if some fraction of our people, whether it be one third or one fifth or 1/10, is ill-fed, ill-clothed ill-housed, and insecure.

This republic had its beginning and grew to its present strength under the protection of certain inalienable political rights. Among them, the right of free speech, free press, free worship, trial by jury, freedom from unreasonable searches and seizures. These were our rights to life and liberty. As our nation has grown in size and stature, however, as our industrial economy expanded, these political rights proved inadequate to assure us equality in the pursuit of happiness.

We have come to a clear realization of the fact that true individual freedom cannot exist without economic security and independence. Necessities men are not free men. People who are hungry and out of a job are the stuff of which dictatorships are made. In our days, these economic truths have become accepted as self-evident. We have accepted, so to speak, a second bill of rights under which a new basis of security and prosperity can be established for all, regardless of station, race, or creed.

Among these, are the right to a useful and remunerative job in the industries or shops or farms or mines of the nation. The right to earn enough to provide adequate food and clothing and recreation. The right of every farmer to raise and sell his products at a return which will give him and his family a decent living. The right of every businessman, large and small, to trade in an atmosphere of freedom from unfair competition, and the domination by monopolies at

home and abroad.

The right of every family to a decent home. The right to adequate medical care and the opportunity to achieve and enjoy good health. The right to adequate protection for the economic fears of old age, sickness, accident, and unemployment. The right to a good education. All of these rights spells security, and after this war is won, we must be prepared to move forward in the implementation of these rights to new goals of human happiness and well-being.

America's own rightful place in the world depends in large part upon how fully these, and similar rights, have been carried into practice for our citizens. For unless there is security here at home, there cannot be lasting peace in the world." And this is the prescient warning that FDR leaves us with. One of the great American industrialists of our day, a man who has rendered yeoman service to his country in this crisis, recently emphasized the grave dangers of rightist reaction in this nation. All clear thinking businessmen share his concern.

"Indeed, if such reactions should develop if history were to repeat itself and we were to return to the so-called normalcy of the 1920s, that it is certain that even though we shall have conquered our enemies on the battlefields abroad, we shall have yielded to the spirit of fascism here at home." That was FDR in 1944. Sounds a lot like Bernie Sanders in 2016, and a host of other candidates who are now running across the country.

That list of economic rights, which FDR sought to secure for America, actually knowing he was coming to the end of his life, asking his successors to try to secure. When Bernie Sanders announced for president at 3% of the vote total in 2015, these were the issues that he articulated. They were considered fringe issues that were outside of the mainstream of American politics, but we saw as we moved along in the 2015 and 2016 campaign, that in fact, the American public, Democrats, and I have to tell you, independents who in most places can vote in the Democratic primary process. Certainly can here in Rhode Island, but in many places they cannot, overwhelmingly responded to this call for us to return to the modern roots of the Democratic Party and to try to fulfill this unfilled legacy of FDR and his administration.

The warning, I think, is precious because in my view, we sit now on the edge of a knife as a nation. We can fall one way or the other. In many ways, we are facing the same crisis that our Western allies faced at the beginning of the 20th century, and they were unable internally to deal with the problem. At great expense, to this world. We all talk about the greatest

generation. Many of whom gave up their lives on the beaches of Normandy or in the Pacific to remedy the fact that our Western allies were unable to deal with their internal problems in the 1930s.

We cannot afford to fail. We have got to return to our modern roots. We have got to bring people back into the political process who have left the political process. We have got to get young people reengaged, and those people, in my view, who have come to the view that the Democratic Party is not a vehicle for change. We need to bring those people back into the Democratic Party reimbibe the spirit that will allow us to make these changes.

We traveled the country with Bernie in 2015 and 2016. Places that you would thought were what are called true red places, rural America, quote unquote "moderate Democrats", independents flocked to Bernie's banner during the course of the campaign. We won-- conversations I've had with friends of mine in the Clinton campaign. I campaigned very hard for Hillary Clinton in the fall of 2016, as did Bernie.

They understood at the beginning of a campaign that they were going to win moderates and conservative Democrats, and Bernie might win with liberal Democrats. Well it turned out, of course, that he was much more popular with conservative Democrats, rural Democrats. We've got to bring these people back together. The Republican Party in this country, their stock and trade is dividing people up.

They divide us by religion by race, by gender, by gender identity, by where we were born, and it is our job to bring together a coalition of working people in marginalized communities in this country, which is capable of taking back power from the rightist reaction that we're seeing in America, and bringing us to new levels of peace and prosperity in this country. I know there'll be a lot of questions about the campaign itself, but I do want to say this about the campaign. It was revolutionary in many ways, and Bernie, in fact, did win.

People say, oh, Bernie didn't win, why is the book called *How Bernie Won*. Bernie Sanders talked about a Medicare for all health care system in this country, something that was thought to be outside of the mainstream. Recent polling has showed that 80% of Democrats and over 50% of Republicans now support a Medicare for all system in this country. A \$15 minimum wage, which was his position and now is and trying to the Democratic National Committee's whose platform is being passed by ballot initiative in red states all across this country.

Free tuition at public colleges and universities, it's something we actually used to have in

United States of America and which we have lost, is also gaining currency. It's in the Democratic Party platform, I know a number of governors across the country are acting either wholly or partly in support of such an initiative, and on and on, and the issues that Bernie talked about we're seeing the Democratic Party, and frankly, the mainstream of American politics, swinging in his direction.

I also want to point out that large number of very exciting progressive candidates who are running around across the country and winning. The platform that Bernie laid out, that FDR laid out, and that we have to embrace if we're going to move forward. But certainly, all of you have heard about Alexandra Ocasio Cortez who defeated Joe Crowley in New York, but there are so many others.

Andrew Gillum in Florida is running for governor, Stacey Abrams in Georgia, Ben Jealous was the Democratic nominee in Maryland, who was one of our supporters. I was talking to a candidate, Lewis Watson in southern Indiana, and all across the country in red places, in purple places you're seeing progressives who are winning, and in general election contests look to be successful.

Sometimes people-- I got this question earlier today. Many people say, well, what does it matter if we nominate all these progressives and they turn round and lose because they can't win in general elections and quote unquote "purple places." well the truth of the matter, in my view, the only way to win in these places is with these candidates. You will never reconstitute the New Deal coalition of the Democratic Party, which included a lot of rural people in the plain states of this country without a boldly progressive message.

A neoliberal aberration of the 1990s, the experiment was a failure. We lost thousands of seats. We lost the House of Representatives the first time since 1952, and the Democratic Party under Bill Clinton, which came into office in 1992 is a president who, was a three way race, he did not get a majority of voters. Broke faith with the historic base, the Democratic Party, the labor movement in this country, with NAFTA and other trade deals we were just talking earlier, Susan, about Ohio and the devastation that happened in Ohio as a result of these trade agreements.

And then, in an attempt to keep power after they lost the House or were losing it in 1994, they turned to a very dangerous policy of triangulating against the most vulnerable members of the democratic coalition. The Crime Bill, which led to the mass incarceration of millions in this

country. DOMA, which targeted LGBT people in this country. It was a Clinton initiative and they touted on Christian radio in the south in 1996 re-election campaign, and the Welfare Reform Bill, which was a hollow echo of the Reagan Welfare Queen racist attack of the 1980s.

This is what we get when we lose faith with this message that I talked about of creating a country that works, as Bernie would say, a government and an economy that works for all Americans, and not just those at the top. So this message that I'm putting forward. This agenda of Roosevelt, this agenda of Bernie, and so many other candidates, it's not just the right thing to do. It's the winning thing to do.

And in fact, in many ways, it is the only way for us to win and beat back this Trump counter revolution. Because Trump, as bad as he is, I know many of you in this room thought, god, George W Bush is really bad. It cannot get any worse than George W Bush, like this is the bottom. And now we have Trump. And don't think that Trump is the bottom because there's worse than even Trump out there.

And if we cannot recapture, if we cannot bring together working people of all races in this country, if we cannot reconstitute this FDR coalition, we run the risk of going even further down this very, very dangerous path from which there may not be a return. And we've seen a glimpse of it.

When you see young children torn from their mother's arms and caged in this country, when you see it whole classes of people based on their religion excluded from the country, you begin to get a glimpse of what is possible, even in the United States of America. So that the sacrifices of our greatest generation will have been for not, and we will have gone down the same road that so many of them sacrificed so that our allies did not have to live under those situations.

So I'm going to open it up to a little conversation here. Sorry to start in such a bleak tone. I do want to say that given all that, I am very hopeful about the state of American politics. The evidence is very clear the young people of this country are incredibly progressive generation. It is very hopeful for the future. We just have to get more of them out to vote. The truth of the matter is that if young people voted in the same percentages as people at the other end of the spectrum, there would be almost no Republicans in this country.

The demographic power of the millennial generation is such that they could turn this around in two or three elections, but we have got to get young people involved. We've got to excite

them. This is part of the challenge of the modern Democratic Party, which is why we need a bold agenda because the major crisis for the Democratic Party today is relevancy. Is it going to be relevant? A party that does not have adherents is irrelevant, and the Democratic Party has to be the vehicle for change. And a lot of people like flirtations with third parties, but the practical reality is-- and it's happening. People are running in democratic, not only for office, but for Democratic Party offices all across this country.

I was just at a DNC meeting in Chicago where they voted to get rid of superdelegates on the first ballot of the presidential nominating process. 30% of the people at the DNC were Bernie-elected people. So change is happening within the party, and we have got to accelerate it, but that requires young people and people who have turned away from the political process to re-engage the dem mentor, and take the party back so that we can take the country back. There you go.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** You sound just like Bernie.

**JEFF WEAVER:** There you go.

[APPLAUSE]

**JIM MORONE:** Let me just say, hold that book up because I've read I believe all the books on the last presidential election, and this is the one that makes you smile. It is really a wonder.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Says that only the best possible.

**JIM MORONE:** But let's start.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Do you want me to go over there?

**JIM MORONE:** Sure, which, whatever you're comfortable with.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah. Let's sit down. Let's have a conversation.

**JIM MORONE:** Oh, great. So there is also a man behind this book, and I thought maybe just to take a minute in and say a word about you. The book starts when Jeff is a volunteer, I won't say what year, for Bernie--

**JEFF WEAVER:** 1986.



**JIM MORONE:** --for Bernie Sanders that you call it death by 1,000 cuts. Just tell us a little bit about that very first campaign of yours.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, so I was in 1986, I was a student Boston University and I was asked to leave, let's put it that way, for anti-apartheid activity at BU at the time. So I went back home to a very small town in Northern Vermont, where there are more cows and people, and I was like, what am I going to do now? And so there was this mayor of Burlington, an independent mayor running for governor, so I called up his campaign.

And a campaign worker appeared at my door a few days later, and this should have been the warning sign within a couple of hours, I was the county coordinator for a gubernatorial campaign. I had no campaign experience whatsoever. So I was asked to staff Bernie at a dairy festival in my county. More cows than people, remember? And so Bernie handed me this paper bag full of buttons, steel buttons, that had Bernie on them, and I had a sign. And so I had to hand Bernie these buttons.

So I would jam my hand into this bag of steel buttons, of course, all the pins were open. And I would hand to Bernie. He would stick him in his pocket and he would go run to introduce himself and hand these buttons out to people. And every time somebody took one, of course, probably one step closer to jamming my hand back in there. So apparently I did a good enough job, he asked me to come down and I worked for him in Burlington a couple days a week, and that was 32 years ago and here I am a couple of days and weeks later.

**JIM MORONE:** It's a great story in the book. I think those of us who watch the ups and downs of the Bernie campaign, and I want to turn to the what I felt was the greatest down. And that was the whole--

**JEFF WEAVER:** Wow, a downer.

**JIM MORONE:** A downer during that summer. The netroots meeting where Black Lives Matter and Bernie. Now reading for the New York Times, you get the idea that Bernie just had no clue about race as he conflicted with Black Lives Matter, but in the book, the story comes out very differently. Would you tell them that one?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, look, so there's a lot about race in the book because race was something it was obviously a big theme in the campaign, but also was weaponized in many ways by our opponents to the point that our supporters, or young supporters of color, felt so upset and angry about the whitewashing of our campaign, that they started a hashtag called

#BernieMadeMeWhite. I don't know if you've ever read this, but it's difficult to read because the evidence, and there's been so much research done since then, I mean, the evidence is clear that Bernie was winning millennials of all races, all through the campaign. And was actually having trouble with older voters of all races throughout the campaign.

And there was a tremendous frustration. Black Lives Matter, which is the most significant civil rights movement of the modern era, right? It's been tremendously successful, and for tactical reasons, saw our campaign as an opportunity to highlight the issues that they were concerned about, in part because the audience that Bernie was bringing was viewed as potentially more sympathetic, and also because I think they also wanted to-- and I don't want to speak for them, obviously but my understanding of it, they wanted to highlight to this audience that they should be-- if you're progressive, you should be concerned about these issues.

And I have to tell you that the success of the Black Lives Matter was so overwhelming, that there was no line with voters, even audiences that were almost entirely white, that would call for criminal justice reform in the United States, and that was really due to the work that Black Lives Matter was doing. And Black Lives Matter as a political matter it was interesting, because it was a movement, not an organization. There was no leader or political department that you would call.

In campaigns. If you have trouble with another organization or conflict organization, you call the leadership of the other organization and say, hey, let's have a meeting. Let's talk this out, but there was there was no one to call, right? And so it created a lot of strength in their movement because it couldn't be decapitated, first of all, and it couldn't be co-opted.

From our end, it created a logistical challenge because every city you went into was a different Black Lives Matter chapter, and Bernie would meet with Black Lives Matter leaders in every city along the way. And I had to say that those conversations were some, like from a personal standpoint, some of the most meaningful conversations and real conversations held far from the cameras that I've been involved with in my political life. So I mean there's more about it in the book, but I mean, it was just a very interesting time.

The difficulty is we're trying to have this constructive dialogue with Black Lives Matter, while our opponents wanted to use the fact that we're having this dialogue as an opportunity to say, oh, black people don't like Bernie, right? Which clearly, I mean, the Harvard Harris poll this spring was very clear, Bernie's most popular with African-American voters now. Anyway, so it

was difficult to have in all these false narratives in the campaign, which one of the reasons why I was motivated to write the book because if I didn't write it, nobody was going to.

**JIM MORONE:** One more personal question before I get back to the fact of the policy issues. There's a lot of people there, particularly in the overflow room, who want to be you. How do you get to run a campaign--

**JEFF WEAVER:** Oh, I thought you were going to say, how do you start a comic book store?

**JIM MORONE:** Either one. Whichever you'd rather. Either the comic book store, how do you get into this game?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, well, look, I've told the audiences this which is the truth. I've never planned out my life, right? I've just done things and then things have happened and I've done something else and it's about something else. So I don't spend a lot of time-- I never have-- decided 20 years from now, I'm going to be this and I have these benchmarks. I've enjoyed living life that way. But if you want to be involved in politics, I would say just go do it.

But it requires you, I spend a lot of time driving, carrying notepads, getting somebody water, keeping my mouth shut, but being in the room, which is a tremendous advantage to be in the room. So I would encourage people to work for candidates, work for campaigns, get experience, you will move up. I mean there's going to be a million opportunities coming up in 2020 time frame.

There's going to be a zillion Democrats running, if that's your thing. If you like Republicans, well look we won, I guess. But there'll be plenty of opportunities. If you're a progressive or democratic you need opportunities to work on a presidential campaign, and I encourage you to take advantage of it, and in many ways campaigns are strange creatures, but they are a meritocracy of sorts. And you can rise up. Yeah.

**JIM MORONE:** So--

**JEFF WEAVER:** Don't plan your life. That's a very bad way to live life.

**JIM MORONE:** All right, don't plan your life. That's very good advice. Let's imagine that Bernie won the primaries. Would you do the November-- looking backwards, what did the campaign look like? The great election between Trump and Sanders?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, I think there would have been a massive voter registration campaign that would have gone on. Obviously, a lot of things that Hillary Clinton did do I think Bernie would have been more forward in trying to fight voter suppression in a bunch of places because that's obviously affecting the democratic vote, and I think you would have seen a much more bare knuckle contest about these fundamental issues that I talked about in FDR's a speech in a way that it was not possible for somebody of Hillary Clinton's political persuasion to carry on.

**JIM MORONE:** Who wins?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Oh, look, I think it's pretty clear that Bernie would have won that race. In fact, one of Trump's pollsters earlier this spring said if Bernie had been the candidate, Bernie would have beaten them. So [INAUDIBLE] lost Michigan, Wisconsin, and Pennsylvania, period.

**JIM MORONE:** What might have been. So let's move on to 2020. Handicap 2020 first. What's going to happen?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Well, I don't want to ruin the book for anybody, but the last three words of my book are run, Bernie run. So look, I'm convinced that he's the strongest candidate against Trump. He's deliberating about it. That is an issue that weighs on his mind. He wants to be confident that if he runs, he is the strongest candidate against Trump because he wants to see Trump beaten.

Look at a lot of great candidates in the democratic field. I'm not going to talk about any of them at this point, but I do think he is the strongest candidate because he has-- for this reason. He has an incredible appeal among young people who may or may not vote, if it's not somebody like Bernie or Bernie. Because people this old notion of politics. Democrats on the left, Republicans on the right, these moderate independents in the middle. Well, over 50% of millennials are registering as independents, right? There's a whole group now of independents who are not here, they're over here.

And when a Democratic candidate is too far over here, these people, they don't vote for the Republican, they just go away, right? And the other thing is this Bernie Sanders incredible strength in independent voters. We saw all through the primary process, he was winning in the Democratic primaries 70%, 80% of independents. Wildly popular with that group, and he can create that kind of coalition that we need to beat the Republicans.

**JIM MORONE:** Tell us little bit more about how he's thinking about this. Insofar as you can tell what. How does he make a decision like this? And what are the pros and cons in his mind of running?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Well, I'm not a big divulger of private conversations, which is why I'm probably with him for 30 years, but I will say this. For him, the goal in 2020 is to beat Trump period. Question is-- there's a lot of great candidates on the Democratic side-- they all have strengths. Question is, what candidate can put together the coalition that is most likely to beat Trump and to kick out a bunch of other Republicans as well? And I think that that's the calculus that he's going over in his mind. Running for president is a difficult process. It seems all glamorous, it is anything but glamorous. Either running for president, or working for someone.

**JIM MORONE:** Is there anybody of the others, run, Bernie run. We got it. Is there anybody else you--

**JEFF WEAVER:** Trying to nail me down. I got to use my CNN agent skills. Go ahead.

**JIM MORONE:** You can always say, let's go to the audience for questions. My last one. Are there people you look at you think, if not Bernie, who is clearly superior, anybody you think, gee--

**JEFF WEAVER:** You're trying to make news here. You're trying to make news--

**JIM MORONE:** All right, let's go to the audience! OK, time for you guys. And if you don't ask questions, I'm going to go back to it. Go ahead.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** And I want to actually have a public service announcement. Again, I want to welcome our colleagues in the McKinney conference room and the south common room. And up in the South common room, Nancy will take your questions. If you have a question give it to Nancy and she will text it down to us. In McKinney, Zoey, is the person to give your questions to. And here we're delighted to have Parisa and Maria with the microphones, and they will bring the microphone to you.

We would invite our speakers here to speak directly into the microphone, and our audience, since we are such a full house tonight, we would invite you to ask one direct question, and then share the air with your colleagues.

**JIM MORONE:** You get the drill. Keep them short. There's one right here. Quickly your name and then to the question.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi, I'm Lauren. I'm wondering if you could talk more about how to best put pressure on the DNC to engage youth voters and adopt more of a progressive agenda while also not wanting to jeopardize success. I was also at the DNC summer meeting this summer with the fossil fuel PAC resolution, so I would love to hear more about that.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, so I told the story earlier today. In the summer of 2015, Bernie and I and a couple other staffers went to the DNC summer meeting in Minneapolis, right? And we got off the plane and it was like, oh, my god, look at these. They're exotic animals. They're kind of dangerous, let's get a look at them, but not too close. And the summer meeting this year was entirely different.

There are a large number of Bernie aligned Democrats who have won election, and just having say 30% of the people in the room who are aligned with progressive politics just changes the entire nature of the enterprise. How you put pressure on him is that you run in county committee elections at the grassroots. That's how you do it, and you work and help whichever presidential candidate you want to support because in that process, and it's different in every state by the way, but there's a whole process for electing the DNC members from the various states, and you need to be involved in that process.

In caucus states is much easier to affect that change because that happens the same night as the presidential caucus. In primary states, it's often on a separate night and you need to be organized around it. But the truth of the matter is-- and I'll tell you, there's a county in Florida where a couple arranged a bus of 50 people to go to Iowa for Bernie. So they went to Iowa. And then they arranged that same bus of 50 people to go to South Carolina for Bernie. And then they got home and they went to their county meeting, and you know what? There were fewer people at the county meeting than there were on the bus.

Now she's the chair of the party and he is the congressional candidate in that district, so that's how you put pressure on the DNC is that you run for office, and I don't mean for political office, but for party office. That's what you do. And everybody in the Democratic Party, because they're all political people, understand political power.

**JIM MORONE:** I think we've got a question from the overflow. I think Parisa is going to ask it.

**AUDIENCE:** Yeah, we have a student upstairs who is curious about electronic blockchain voting, and they're wondering what your thoughts are on them. Blockchain voting. I don't think I know what that is.

**JIM MORONE:** OK we're going duck that one. It's a good question.

**JEFF WEAVER:** No. I want to know what it is. What is it?

**JIM MORONE:** It's a whole other way of voting. It's a methodology where you can always trace back exactly

how you voted. So that you've got a paper trail of your own.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Oh, I think that's fantastic, right? I think that's beautiful. Yes. Look it's more transparent. The more transparency, the better. I vote in Virginia. For a long time, we had these they've now been scuttled, thankfully, these opaque machines where they had like a wheel and it moved the thing up and down, and you put in code and you push some buttons. And at the end, a little flag waved that said you had voted.

But it was no paper trail, it never went anywhere. And I was there doing voter protection for Obama in both elections, and I was there at 5:30 in the morning with the part time election volunteers. Who God, bless them were there opening these boxes with these computer machines and every guy holding up two hands full of chords that were supposed to connect these things. I was like, oh, my god. Everybody's well-intentioned, but it could be a problem. And the you did a recount on those machines, you push a button, it would give you the count. And if you had to do a recount, you pushed the button again and then that would do the recount.

So they've gotten rid of those machines now. They now have ones that produce sheet, which are then fed into machine which is better, but I think it's creating a record that I think is fantastic.

**JIM MORONE:** It's a whole technology. All right, someone in this room. Kevin.

**AUDIENCE:** Kevin Coster--

**JIM MORONE:** Oh, I'm sorry wait.

**AUDIENCE:** Kevin Coster, proud Brown alumnus. Oh, Adam Schiff. Ranking member of the House select committee. He was here a while back and he said he volunteered. No one even asked him, but in the context of talking about Russia, he said, as soon as Bernie lost, Trump won. And he's not necessarily even a Bernie supporter. My question is the coalition that can conceivably achieve these goals in 2020.

Now, understandably, you encourage young people to participate because that would obviously be a necessary part of a successful coalition. But I'm thinking about, not necessarily what is the taken for granted part of the coalition, but what part of a successful coalition that we have to contend for with the opposing side? A successful coalition, what part of it we have

to win that we can't take for granted and it's not a matter of just getting a greater turnout, but we have to actually convince them to vote our way as opposed to--

**JEFF WEAVER:** Sure. Well that varies state by state, but I would say this. In the Priorities USA, which was the Super PAC which supported Obama and then Hillary did some research at the end of the campaign about what went wrong, and there were two groups of people identified. Working class people, in general, and then young people of color. And young people of color, they didn't vote for Trump, they didn't vote, right?

And working class people, in many cases, voted for Trump as opposed to voting for Hillary. In fact, if you look at in Pennsylvania, the Scranton media market is 10% of the state. But it represented 40% of the flip from Obama to Trump, right? People voted for Obama twice, and then voted for Trump. And that's a post-industrial, traditional working class area. So this is a group of voters that we have to win back, but in many ways, they were lost back in the 90s, right?

They voted for Obama because Obama was an inspiring national figure, but as a party, institutionally to be able to hold to those voters, we have got to reestablish faith with them. And that means Trump plays the trade game, he's good at pointing out the problem. His answer is to throw a hand grenade into the middle of it. That's not really helpful, but we do have to address this issue of trade obviously and corporate control of the economy.

So we've got to reestablish faith to that group of people, but I don't want you to sort of underestimate the challenge of getting people to quote unquote "vote" who are otherwise with us. We just have to get them to vote because that's a big challenge. And that's young people, and a lot of people have given up faith that the Democratic Party can be an instrument of change in the country, and we've got to reestablish that by leading with a platform that has got to inspire people.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. So I just have a question regarding-- I know you talked about how Bernie is hearkening back to this new deal age of progressivism and these policies that are typically been regarded as Social Democrat policies, but have kind of started to be seen as more radical even not as like the same common sense, like mainstream, liberal ideas. And my question is kind of regarding the fact that Bernie makes a very deliberate choice to refer to himself as a democratic socialist, not as a Social Democrat, and obviously, there's a lot of taboos on that word and we're starting to see it normalized. like Conversations like we're on the view and



stuff, so my question is like, why does Bernie make that choice and what do you think has to happen for that to become more part of the mainstream discourse?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah. So Bernie, one of the things people like about Bernie is his consistency. He's been referring himself to that way for decades, and I talked about this in a class earlier today. Bernie is not the type of-- he's not a modulator. He has delivered a consistent message for decades, including that label. You're right that that label is the Red Scare aspect about labels is going away, particularly with young people.

I don't actually think you get much by calling yourself a Social Democrat over a democratic socialist, or frankly, calling yourself a progressive or in many cases, calling yourself a Democrat because we've seen it in race after race this year. Beto O'Rourke is a socialist, Hillary Clinton's a socialist, Barack Obama is a socialist, it doesn't-- you're not going to stop them from putting a label on you, and so anybody who cares in a negative way is-- I just don't think that has a lot of weight, frankly. And if you look at the voters who voted for Bernie, these are all the voters you think would be oh, scared away from this label, and it just people look past the label, frankly.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** Let's take another question from upstairs. Someone from upstairs is wondering what you think progressive foreign policies look like?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Well that's good. Actually Bernie just wrote in an article and this was in the guardian a few days ago, which you should read, which is a very interesting article. And this actually ties in with what I was talking about a little bit ago about us being in a little bit of a 1920s and 30s European redox right now. There's this proliferation of right-wing nationalist movements all around the world in Hungary and Italy, Poland, and a lot of other places. And what's that?

**JIM MORONE:** I was saying England.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Well, the ones in Hungary and Poland are the places there are the traditional, proto fascist version. And you know you're seeing in Russia, obviously, you're seeing a cooperation between these entities. Steve Bannon is running around in Italy trying to connect right-wing and left-wing populism, which is something that happened in Germany in the 1920s. Until all of those sort of left-wing populist were done away with in of the long knives.

But Bernie talked about how we bring together a coalition of progressive front. International progressive front that could confront the rise of this axis of right-wing nationalism that's going

around the country. You obviously have the movement in Britain, Greece, Spain, and a host of other places in Mexico, now. Where you have progressive leaders who need to stand together internationally to prevent the spread of this right-wing populism. Wait for the mic.

**AUDIENCE:**

Hi, I am Jack. I was in high school during the 2016 election, and I noticed amazingly, how much the messaging of Bernie Sanders broke through, especially to young people. I was wondering how that worked and in terms of whether or not messaging was policy or vice versa, or it was a little bit of both in the reaction to the messaging it pushed further what Bernie stood for?

**JEFF WEAVER:**

Yes, so we didn't have a pollster until November of 2015. So the policy messaging you were getting was Bernie. It was not like it was some poll tested, and when we did get a pollster, after a bunch of us screamed that we needed a pollster for this reason, which is Bernie had an hour and 20 minute stump speech, which over the course of the campaign grew to be a two hour stump speech.

So the question becomes, when you are going to do more traditional forms of advertising, whether it's mail or television or radio or digital, you can't present two hours to people. It's cost prohibitive. So the question is, what portion of your message is most powerful with which group of voters? So you want to deliver that to that group of voters, right? So in a 30 second TV ad, what part of the two hours are going to deliver in 30 seconds?

So polling was very important for that purpose. But Bernie's message is then its appeal to young people was completely organic. Now, once young people were, it was clear that they were on his side, and it was overwhelming. four to one, five to one, sometimes more. We know we did do a lot of outreach to young people to get young people to come out, including where it was permitted. In a lot of places, high school seniors who were 17 and we're going to be 18 by the general election can participate in a primary caucus. It's not true everywhere, but in many places, it is. Iowa certainly is. And we did a lot of outreach, in fact, the high school seniors where that was permitted to get them to come out to vote.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** We have another question from upstairs. How does Bernie and the policies he advocates fit into increased polarization in American politics? In what ways is the left contributing to political polarization?

**JEFF WEAVER:**

Yeah, so that agenda I just read to you. That agenda FDR agenda, Bernie agenda is often polled, and it does very well across partisan groups. As I mentioned before, 80% of

Democrats, over 50% of Republicans now support Medicare for all. So America as a whole, has an economically populist vision in view.

That is not often reflected in the mainstream media or certainly what you get from this sort of corporate elites, but in fact, this very much is America. This is how the Democrats were successful for decades, and this is how they will be successful again. So in fact, this is a way to bring together that coalition. It's not just about bringing the coalition together, it's how you do it. And what you do is you articulate a message which is unifying, and at the end of the book, I talk about the Republicans are very good about dividing people up, as I mentioned.

And typically the way it is done, is that this other group, whichever group is not the part of the group that they're talking to. Is somehow, whatever we do for them is a disadvantage to you. And so they try to pit people against one another. And what we have to do, as Democrats, is to articulate what I call a set of common aspirations because when you do poll people, and say, what do you want for you and your family? I mean across race, across age, across gender lines, the answers are incredibly similar, right?

People want economic security, they want to live in social dignity, they want their kids to have more opportunity than they did, they don't want to be bankrupted by illness, they want to have it a retirement with dignity, they want to be able to afford their parents long-term care. It's so consistent, and so the message of what America wants in this regard, is very clear.

Now at the same time, we have to realize and I think in the 2016 campaign, our campaign did a much better job than Hillary's did in articulating those common aspirations. What we also have to acknowledge though is that the barriers that exist in every community to achieving those common aspirations is different, right? Some places are deindustrialized, some are not. Some places face police violence against their citizens. Some do not. Some places have bad schools, some do not.

And so we have to address these barriers. In many ways, Hillary Clinton's campaign did a better job of articulating this issue of barriers to success, but we have got to do them together. So articulating within a frame of common aspirations, but acknowledging that they are different efforts are required in different communities to allow everyone the opportunity to achieve those common aspirations. But within that frame then, helping one community is not coming at the expense of the other, but rather, lifting up all communities to this common American vision.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** Someone back.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. Thanks for coming in and speaking to us tonight.

**JEFF WEAVER:** My pleasure.

**AUDIENCE:** I think your focus on progressive coalitions and policy is exactly right. My question is just a little bit different. What--

**JEFF WEAVER:** I like the first part--

**AUDIENCE:** Not to ignore anything you said, but just here's another thing to think about, that I think-- and you can tell me if you think no, we don't need to worry about that so much, but I don't think you'll say that. What do we do about the electoral college and how do we do it?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Good question. Yes, so well, there's a couple ways to do it. One is to abolish it through a constitutional amendment, that would be the most straightforward way. There's been a number of proposals to have compacts between states that say when somebody has gotten you know x number of the minority votes they'll say, wait. That's the other way of dealing with it.

The electoral college clearly has problems and comes from another era, right? I mean, I came from Vermont where, in theory, the electoral college would be popular because it gives small rural states a disproportionate Rhode Islander, gives small states a disproportionate say in the presidential election process. On the other hand, and what it does, in effect, though is force campaigns into a few states that are quote unquote "battlegrounds". It's winner take all. You end up having Ohio becomes a battleground or Florida. Now, apparently a lot of battlegrounds. Places we didn't think were battlegrounds, Wisconsin is a battleground.

So if you take it away, what does that mean, right? So you're going to do away with the notion of a battleground, but then are you going to create a situation where you have sort of battleground suburbs, which are where huge numbers of people are located and where you create a different kind of not really gaming, but emphasis in the electoral process. So it clearly has to be reformed when the majority of Americans are being ignored in multiple elections in the course of 20 years, that's a problem.

But we have to think about what-- so just doing away with it straightforward on the face of it sounds right to me, but what is the impact of that in terms of ensuring that you get a

presidential candidate who that he or she is focusing on the entirety of the country, right? You don't want campaigns just run in the New York, Dallas, and LA suburbs, right? That would be a problem as well.

**JIM MORONE:** No one's mentioned white nationalism. I mean, Trump has left that out of the box. You've suggested various ways Bernie would shake things up, but could you address that particular toxic story? Yeah, well, FDR, I mean he says it here. People that are hungry, without a job, or the things that which dictatorships are made. People know there are problems in this country. People work hard, they can't get ahead, they think their kids are going to be further behind than they were, they have aging parents they can't afford to take care of. They know there's a problem, right?

And so when there's a problem out there, people look for solutions. Even if they're the wrong solutions or the reasons like, why is this happening to me? And obviously, Trump, and worse, pedal a really disgusting kind of snake oil, which has been done for centuries it's people of another race or people of another nationality are the cause of this, right? I mean, this is I mean this is what happened to Germany, right? And the Great Depression of the '30s in other places.

So we need to articulate an alternative explanation for what's going on in this country. And it has nothing to do with the fact that your neighbors a different color than you are, or that some folks move into town who happen to come from another country, or somebody is a different gender, or they love someone of the same gender, these are all BS reasons for why your life is not going well, right? Your life is not going well because of an economic and political system, which is dominated by people at the top, whose interest it is in making sure that your life doesn't go well. That's the problem. And if Democrats are willing to say that, they will turn this country over to the white nationalists.

Let's take-- we're running out of time. So we'll take three questions very quickly. You can answer one or all.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Speed round.

**JIM MORONE:** Speed round.

**AUDIENCE:** Thank you. So I know that like obviously Hillary and Bernie had very different messaging. So I was wondering how in the primary you best balance like promoting your message over the

other message, while still not severely like tarnishing the reputation of another party member.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, look, I sometimes get criticized. You were too hard on Hillary, you caused her to lose, blah, blah, blah. I think it's all hogwash, frankly. I think that the 2016 race was by and large pretty tame by primary standards. And if you want, you know we're talking about FDR, you want to go back and read about the fights between the progressive and conservative wings of the Democratic Party at that time. I mean, they were vicious. I mean make today look like nothing.

So I think that if-- look, you got to keep it to a policy level. I'm a big fan of primaries. I actually like primaries because I think it is an important way that the grassroots signals to party leaders about where the grass of the party is because it's not really any other mechanism for doing it, and so if you're nominating progressives all over that tells party leaders the grassroots is in a more progressive posture, right? And if you're not, then that tells them something as well. So look, I think you've got to have campaigns-- vigorously run campaigns-- on the issues. Not the personalities.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** We have one more from upstairs. Where will the tens of billions of dollars for the robust social programs come from?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Well, look, we're going to start making the rich pay their fair share of taxes in this country. We're going to rollback this disastrous Republican tax bill. The one legislative accomplishment of the Trump administration, besides judges, which is a separate thing, but in terms of legislation that has passed, the one legislative accomplishment of the Trump administration is not surprisingly that a huge payoff to corporate America and to the wealthiest people in this country because at the end of the day, that's what Republican politics are all about.

Rewarding the rich, keeping money at the top of the income ladder, and starving everything else out. It's not surprising they passed this tax bill, then they start talking about how we have to scale back social security and Medicare after they just passed this bill. They're not giving federal employees a cost of living increase because there's just no money, but there's always money to pay for the rich and to pay for overseas wars. I don't know, it's incredible.

**JIM MORONE:** All right. We're really going to do a speed round now.

**AUDIENCE:** Hello. My name is David. What advice would you provide to the future generations and young progressive candidates who want to continue this message? Because we live in a very

individualized country. How do we shift the cultural norm?

**JIM MORONE:** That's such a good question, you have to answer it.

**JEFF WEAVER:** Look, you just got gotta-- I was out there with Bernie in 1986 when he got 15% of the vote, right? We go to meetings with eight people, six people. It wasn't the 30,000 people and like it was a New York City or LA during the course of the campaign. You just to go out there and do it, and I was talking to some Brown Democrats earlier today, a lot of politics is a grind, right? It is a day in, day out grind of organizing people, talking to people, and it's like, I said it's like being a religious evangelists. Most of your converts are won one at a time. And that's what you have to do.

**JIM MORONE:** OK.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. Thank you for being here. I'm Justin. I'm a student here. You talked about messaging specifically relating to paid media earlier. But when you have a candidate who's polling at 3% nationally who just started a campaign who nobody knows about, how do you get earned media, which I would think would be a prerequisite for getting donations to paper when you don't have Super PACs?

**JEFF WEAVER:** Yeah, so it was a very difficult. It there is a whole period in the fall of 2015 known as the Bernie blackout, when the national media basically ignored him. And you know we found we went to the first democratic debate in November, November, October of 2015 on CNN and we still had a lot of states where 40% or 45% of the people who didn't know Bernie was or had no opinion of him because they didn't have information.

So he went out there and that debate and basically ran on his platform and tried not to engage much with Hillary Clinton because he just wanted to talk to those 45% of the people didn't know where he was without this back and forth of the thing. That's why he gave that line about he doesn't care about her damn emails, or sick and tired of her damn emails. Which was the most memorable line of the night, which probably helped his name ID across the country, but that's a challenge.

And we went around and we talked we tried to go around the national media talked to local media, we tried to use digital. At the end of the day, we did spend a tremendous amount of money on television. I think of the \$231 million we raised \$27 at a time, we probably spent \$90 million of it on television. My biggest regret being we didn't have another \$50 or \$60 million to

spend on television because it was an incredibly powerful way to spread the message along with digital grassroots. Doing it all is always the best way.

**JIM MORONE:** One last one. Student, let's try to get a last student. Sorry for everybody.

**JEFF WEAVER:** And I'm happy to talk to people afterwards. I'll be outside. Please stop by and talk, even if you're not buying a book, just come out and I'm happy to talk to folks.

**AUDIENCE:** Hi. My name is Peter. Why didn't Bernie become Hillary's VP candidate, and if he had become her VP, do you think--

**JEFF WEAVER:** Well, he wasn't asked to be her VP the nominee who gets to pick who the VP is, and he was on the list. The short list. The 40 person list. There's all these little categories of lists, like generals, business leaders, senators, and then there was like Bernie. And they never asked him to be. I was at an event at a competing university we won't name in the fall after the general election, and Jen Palmieri was there who was Hillary's communications director, and she said, it was so close.

People always say, what if you'd done this. Would that have been enough? What if you'd done this instead? She said it was so close. Any of these things. Putting Bernie on the ticket or going to Wisconsin two more times or doing that any one of those things would've been enough to win it for us. So that I'll leave you with what Jen Palmieri said in a public event at a competing institution.

**SUSAN MOFFITT:** Well thank you very much Jeff and Jim.

[APPLAUSE]