Elected Official Mock Interview Paper

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[Institutional Affiliation(s)]

Author Note

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A lot of health activists agree that health care in the U.S. requires reforms to improve access and equitability. In the paper, I will interview Senator Bernie Sanders and inquire about his current and past political involvement, alongside discussing his position regarding the S.1804 Medicare for all health care bill.

# Interview

## Tell us a little background and history of your political involvement

I was born in Brooklyn, New York. I have been representing Vermont as a Congressman since 1991 and have been the longest-serving congressional member in the U.S. completing eight two-year terms in the House of Representatives. Although I have been serving as an independent member, I have also been a consistent member of the Democratic caucus. Most of my political involvement has broadly revolved around single-payer and universal healthcare, labor rights, tuition-free college education, climate change, and participation in campaigns that call for reduced military spending. Recently, I have also been put a greater emphasis on taking environmental concerns into consideration when international trade agreements are negotiated.

## What are your current areas of political involvement as a Senator?

I have always been passionate about the issue of income inequality across the nation. Besides universal healthcare, some of my recent political campaigns have centered on women’s rights, climate change, and reforming the internal workings of Wall Street. Some of these issues took center stage in my political campaigns and bills after I was elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006. I was again re-elected in 2012, as well as 2018. I hoped to compete with Donald Trump in the 2016 presidential elections but lost my bid for the democratic president to Hilary Clinton, though I am planning to file my nomination for president once again in 2020. Though I have had my differences with Hilary, I remained part of the Democratic caucuses and supported her in her campaign.

## What is the major current policy agenda you are focusing on these days?

I have always been a proponent of universal healthcare. Even with the problems that we have in the American healthcare system, Donald Trump wants to get rid of the Affordable Care Act. In 2017, I proposed the ‘Medicare-for-all’ program which is now being supported by most Democrats in congress. This is now a major policy agenda I am working on, and I am confident that the plan can successfully provide every American access to free healthcare. Secondly, I also find the current administration’s immigration policies to be ‘heartless’. So I am working to offer undocumented immigrants a pathway to citizenship along with developing a comprehensive reform of the immigration system.

## What do you think is the biggest problem with the health care system?

The American healthcare system is one of the most expensive yet inefficient bureaucratic systems in the world. A substantial portion of our population remains underinsured or uninsured despite being one of the most powerful industrial nations today. The biggest problem is that we spend nearly twice as much on health care per capita than the average developed nation. It costs us nearly 18% of the total GDP to sustain current health care spending, yet our healthcare access and outcomes, infant mortality rate, and life expectancy rates remain below par (Papanicolas, Woskie, & Jha, 2018).

## Why do you think the U.S. healthcare system fails?

One of the primary causes of failure in the healthcare system is that the system itself is built to maximize profits of the pharmaceutical industry, insurance companies, and medical equipment suppliers, rather than on providing quality care. The result is that thousands die each year because they cannot access the type of care they need. At the same time, profits of health insurance companies continue to swell at extraordinary levels. This created outrageously high health care costs that led thousands of families to financial ruin and bankruptcy. Moreover, even those who are covered by private health insurance tend to delay buying prescription drugs or seeking medical care due to rising costs, which are already the highest in the world.

## What is the proposed bill about and how do you think it will solve the problem?

The S.1804 bill, also known as the ‘Medicare for All Act’, aims to provide comprehensive and free health care to every person in the country. It rids them of the need for paying insurance premiums, co-payments, or deductibles by radically expanding and overhauling the Medicare system. This means that health coverage would undergo an extensive expansion and will provide services beyond what even the best private insurance plans now cover. The bill will also end the current health insurance-associated tax expenditures in favor of a single-payer system that will fund the whole system on individual income tax and payroll tax alongside a range of other taxes on corporations and wealthier Americans (Congress Gov, 2017). The simpler system will also dramatically lower administrative costs, help with price negotiation and make the system more efficient to operate.

# Critical Reflection

Sanders has always remained an independent politician who espouses the democratic socialist view. However, he has always been a part of the democratic caucus. His presence alone has been influential enough to move the Democratic Party further to the left. However, the Medicare for all bill proposed by sanders is already facing opposition from health corporations. One of the biggest issues with the bill is that it could lead to a radical increase in healthcare costs. However, there have been studies to support the move which indicate that Medicare for all may bring down the overall health care costs in the long run (KHN, 2018). Some parts of the bill are open to interpretation especially with regards to what precise areas of healthcare are “necessary” to be covered by Medicare. Yet regardless of whether the bill is passed, the bill is an important proclamation that health care is a basic right in America, not a privilege.

# References

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