

Biden-Sanders unity task force recommendations – a quick first look

by Albert Fried-Cassorla July 13, 2020

Dear friends,

Good news! The new Biden-Sanders plan is ambitious and exciting. You may not have seen it, as it seems not to interest mainstream media much. Hannity and other such folks are busy slamming it, though.

All of my comments are “just in my opinion,” of course, but your opinions are welcomed by me.

This 110 page document drafted by leading Democrats under the auspices of Joe Biden lays out an attractive blueprint for progress on many fronts for Americans. If you are interested, my thoughts follow. If not, please delete! And do reply wit comments if you are so moved.

Some important notes and caveats:

Without Bernie and our movement, this never would have happened – Our movement includes Bernie 2020, MoveOn, Indivisible, and more. Movement on the platform does not come about by simply wishing for progress. All activists deserve credit for making made this step forward possible.

Further activism and protest will be needed – Changes this big – even in draft form - are not simply granted by the Minuchins and McConnells of the world, or the potentates they serve.

There is no guarantee that Biden will win or that the Dems will take both houses. As our friend Caryl Levin keeps reminding us: anything can happen. We cannot let down our guard or get over-confident, despite the polls. And you know about all the skullduggery.

So here it is the plan:

<https://joebiden.com/wp-content/uploads/2020/07/UNITY-TASK-FORCE-RECOMMENDATIONS.pdf>

If enacted, it would lead to a substantial improvement in living conditions for many. The chief impediments to its being enacted would be having to kowtow to a Republican Senate, (which most of us hope will not be necessary), and facing belligerent opposition from profiteering lobbyists.

This document should be perceived as a statement of goals rather than a detailed blueprint, even though it does have many details. Presumably, legislation will be attached to this and dollar figures assigned and negotiated. So it's hard to tell how it will all shake out. But even so, it's worth pondering.

I scanned the 110 pages and have pulled out a few items that seem noteworthy. They are:

Page 1 - climate crisis - The goals here are important, because they include a major clean energy initiative and a response to the COVID-19 pandemic. And the US will rejoin the Paris climate agreement. All clean energy jobs will provide an opportunity to join unions. Diversity in those jobs will be important. The goal is for zero for greenhouse emissions to be achieved no later than 2050.

This initiative should provide hundreds of thousands of jobs. To me, that sounds hardly adequate when millions of people are unemployed. But perhaps I am only looking at one section of the planned spending.

Page 7 - criminal justice reform

This section speaks about ending the years of mass incarceration. However, as I understand it, Joe Biden was responsible for much of the progressive legislation that has people of color behind bars in huge portions. Perhaps he has changed his stripes. Let's see.

The document speaks of training policing effective nonviolent tactics and making investments in evidence-based programs that work for jobs education and arts. Certainly sounds good!

Page 11 - a stronger economy

This plan deals with him cum disparity racial prejudice gender inequality and more. It speaks of a new contract with the American people for shared prosperity instead of a system that benefits only big corporations and the wealthiest few. Many specifics are laid out. A big investment in infrastructure is call for. It speaks of investments to upgrade states' technology to be sure unemployed workers can get benefits quickly.

The plan calls for building publicly on broadband networks and municipal broadband. Of course, this has been far resisted tenaciously by the telecoms.

The plan calls for raising the federal minimum wage to \$15 an hour, repealing so called "right to work" laws and facilitating union sign-ups. It speaks of creating innovation

hubs to build businesses. It also addresses funding to hire and retain more teachers, healthcare professionals, Nurses, homecare workers social workers and more.

Closing the racial wealth gap is addressed in the Plan with plans for more seed capital access to credit and more.

Page 22 – providing a world-class education

This Plan is strong on pre-and expanding Headstart. It endorses multiple public school pathways. This sounds like it is pro charter school, which in my opinion could be a way to separate the resources of public schools. But I'm not sure.

Charter schools will be required to serve the neediest students. I know from personal experience that many charter schools in Philadelphia exclude the more difficult cases and by doing that achieve greater success numbers.

Making higher education affordable and accessible - This part is very good. It calls for making public colleges and universities tuition free for students whose families are in less than \$125,000 a year. This includes roughly 80% of American people.

Student debt relief end here, the plan looks paltry -- Only \$10,000 in student debt relief per borrower. There are other positive and helpful ingredients, but it looks very weak compared to what Bernie had called for.

Page 28 –universal healthcare

Perhaps key is the call for a platinum level federally administered health insurance option with low fees and no deductible's. Lower low income Americans will be automatically enrolled at zero cost.

Just how low-cost this is will become clear only when it is defined. Of course, it stops short of the universal healthcare that most European countries have. I guess we don't deserve that yet.

Still, if an enacted this would be an amazing step forward, especially in light of the coronavirus.

This document also deals with the following subjects, which I will not expanded upon:

- lower drug prices reducing healthcare costs

- Improving healthcare quality
- expanding access to mental health and substance abuse treatment
- expanding long-term care services
- Investing in health science and research
- creating a humane immigration system
- reinstating the dreamers act
- building a clean energy economy
- promoting union Jobs
- holding polluters accountable
- ensuring safe and affordable water,
- enacting strong emission standards for vehicles
- investing in net negative emissions innovations
- strengthening the federal government's relationship with Native Americans
- protecting parks and preserving land
- Ending solitary confinement in prison except in rare exceptional cases
 - facilitating reentry to society for prisoners and more.

One of the most important innovations is a new jobs program with unprecedented investment in public infrastructure. Depending on how well it's organized and besides the investment, this could be a huge contribution to turning around people's lives.

P. 73 - There is also a major section here on strengthening Social Security and savings for retirement.

As you can see, my "critique" I did not make it to page 110. Some of it repeats plans referenced in earlier sections.

But this is a wonderful document, even as just a blueprint. It is something that can be built upon. If you're interested, encourage you to read the full 110 pages or the sections that interest you most.

The struggle continues and this is just a step, but may be a big one!

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