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## PEOPLE'S FORUM: SANDERS, WARREN, BUTTIGIEG AND CASTRO PRESENT THEIR BONA FIDES TO MIDWESTERN PROGRESSIVE VOTERS

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Sun, Sep 22, 2019 at 2:17 PM



For Immediate Release: September 22, 2019

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## PEOPLE'S FORUM: SANDERS, WARREN, BUTTIGIEG AND CASTRO PRESENT THEIR BONA FIDES TO MIDWESTERN PROGRESSIVE VOTERS

*Four leading candidates vie in an early test of which Democratic candidate resonates with multi-racial progressives on Healthcare, Housing, Free College, Labor, and Immigration*

Des Moines – Yesterday four leading Democratic contenders made their case to over 2,000 working-class, progressive Midwesterners in the Grand Ballroom of the Iowa Events Center in Des Moines. Senators **Bernie Sanders** and **Elizabeth Warren**, Secretary **Julián Castro**, and Mayor **Pete Buttigieg** took their turns addressing the crowd and tens of thousands of livestream viewers at the Iowa's People's Forum, where they faced direct questions from people from across the region on farming, immigration, healthcare, housing, unions, and the Green New Deal.

Hosted by [People's Action](#) and its state-level member organization, [Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement Action](#), the forum was designed to give people struggling in this economy the opportunity to engage directly with the candidates on progressive issues in the [People's Platform](#), People's Action's set of core issues and positions to unite a multi-racial working class across rural, urban, and suburban America. As the Democratic base continues to shift leftward on a range of issues, the People's Platform is a lodestar for candidates vying for the hearts of progressive voters. At the forum on Saturday, candidates emphasized where their own platforms were in line or close to the People's Platform.

Secretary Castro announced from the stage his support of Care In Action's [Universal Family Care proposal](#), after an emotional presentation by two presenters who have become caregivers for loved ones. Rural issues and labor were consistently brought up, with Senators Warren and Sanders

responding directly to questions from activists with the Fight for 15 and Committee for Better Banks, as well as independent family farmers and Central America. And although Senator Sanders' plan for Housing for All comes closest to People's Action's call for a Homes Guarantee, Senator Warren, Secretary Castro, and Mayor Buttigieg all outlined ambitious housing plans that demonstrate a party finally coming to terms with the country's long-simmering crisis.



*"I've been a part of Fight for 15 from the beginning," Senator Warren tells Fight for 15 activists, including leader Terrence Wise.*

**Senator Elizabeth Warren** (begins at 0:54:30) opened by framing her entire platform as in opposition to corruption in government. She also demonstrated deep issue fluency across issues that impact rural communities, from rural broadband, to supply management and supporting new farmers, to funding small community hospitals. Highlights:

- *"The reason I wanted to be here with you today is that you get the heart of this. We're gonna break up Big Ag. We're going to adopt the policies that will let our farmers be good stewards of the earth, and we need Washington to be a good partner in this."*
- *"My vision for rural America is that it should be about smaller farms and more diverse farms. It should be about farmers who farmed for generations, but also new farmers. It's about small communities and protecting rural hospitals. That when I drive around, I am gonna trust that I have good cell service everywhere."*
- *"I've been part of Fight For \$15 from the beginning, and we're gonna do this nationwide. Let's talk about what a president can do all by herself. Part 1, is we can get a Secretary of Labor that's on the side of workers. And we can get an NLRB that's making decisions about unionship*

*that is on the side of unions. One job should be enough.”*



*Secretary Castro hears stories from Lillian Cheesman and Reggie Griffin about becoming unexpected caregivers*

**Secretary Julián Castro** (02:08) became the first presidential candidate to adopt Care in Action’s Universal Family Care, a bold new policy to address the emerging care crisis. The plan would create one integrated fund to make childcare, eldercare, supports for people with disabilities, and paid leave more affordable to every American, while making care jobs good jobs. In addition to healthcare, Castro reaffirmed his commitment to a moratorium on the expansion of factory farms. Highlights:

- *“I believe that in every stage in life we need to make sure that people are well taken care of. That is the commitment that our nation should make. And so in my Working Families First plan, I would expand paid family medical leave and expand the ability for caregivers to spend time away from their employment to take care of family members.”*
- *“I have called for universal childcare, universal pre-k, universal higher education, universal family care and long-term care. I also want to make sure that as the baby boomer generation turns 65, that we have a plan to make sure they’re well taken care of. And that includes a place to live, it includes good healthcare, and it includes making sure that they have the quality of life that this nation can be proud of.”*
- *“We need better environmental protections in place before there is any kind of expansion on factory farming. As President, I will appoint people to the EPA who will not only enforce our laws but strengthen them [and] work with the private sector to incentivize the right behavior and this type of farming. I was the first candidate to release a plan to protect animals and wildlife,*

*including how animals are treated in Ag industry.”*



*Senator Sanders hears from Mental Health Justice Team's Josh Sullivan about the impact of our fragmented insurance system*

**Senator Bernie Sanders** (03:54) offered a bold vision on multiple progressive issues, including his Medicare For All bill, his \$16 trillion dollar proposal to tackle climate change, and his plan to completely eliminate student debt. He also spoke on his plan for housing for all, which falls closely in line with the Homes Guarantee, a plank in People's Action's 2020 platform. In response to Meggan Halvorson, a worker from Wells Fargo from Committee for Better Banks, Senator Sanders discussed his Workplace Democracy Act - legislation that will increase the rights and protections of workers to unionize. It was these types of proposals that launched his campaign in 2016, as he reflected back to being in Iowa four years ago proposing Free College for All, then a radical idea that is now popular amongst progressive presidential candidates.

- *“The Workplace Democracy Act says if 50% of workers in a bargaining unit plus one person sign a card saying they want to join a union, then they have a union, end of discussion; If you form a union and the company refuses to negotiate, severe penalties will be imposed on said company, and it eliminates the power for states to have right-to-work legislation. Our estimate is that we believe that if we do these things, we could double the amount of workers in unions in 4 years.”*
- *“We are seeing a considerable consolidation of Big Ag that is driving family farmers off of the land that their families have worked on for generations. I believe in family based agriculture, in sustainable agriculture, I believe in, when possible, organic-based agriculture. I damn well will not accept a handful of Ag businesses destroying family farmers in Iowa, in Vermont, and across the country.”*
- *“Our proposal is the most comprehensive ever brought forth by any candidate running for federal office to combat climate change. It's a \$16 trillion dollar proposal - it is a lot of money but*

*I don't know what the alternative is when we're fighting for the future of the planet. We are going to stand up to the fossil fuel industry and say: we're gonna end all of their tax breaks and subsidies and tell them that their short term profits are not more important than the future of this planet."*



*Mayor Buttigieg tested on racial justice by Iowa CCI Action's Kelvin Dunigan and Veola Perry*

**Mayor Pete Buttigieg (04:41)** responded substantively and directly, even when his own policies seemed to diverge with the vision of the People's Platform. While the interactions were intense at times, including on issues related to his handling of a police shooting in South Bend and on public health insurance, Mayor Buttigieg was consistent in describing that his healthcare and student debt plans would offer relief to all but the wealthiest Americans. Highlights:

- *"We need to create a public alternative. It's not important to me in principle that your healthcare comes from the government, but it's important to me in principle that you get health care no matter what."*
- *"There's no question that we have a problem when it comes to the diversity of our own police departments. In the same way we need more progressives in law seeking, not only to become public defenders but to become prosecutors, I think we need people who are passionate about justice in policing to consider a career in law enforcement. As president, you will see a reinvigorated civil rights division, which through enforcement and through partnership, will ensure that police departments are doing right by all of their residents."*
- *"We need to make sure that those who have been systematically excluded, often in a racialized fashion and often as a consequence of intentional federal policy, receive justice. And that's why as part of my Douglass Plan for tackling systemic racism in America, I would have us create a 21st century response to the Homestead Act that empowers people to live in the very*

*communities that they were redlined into, and are now being gentrified out of.”*

## MORE TO COME

The People's Platform will be the foundation of a three more [presidential forums](#) in October, in New Hampshire, Michigan, and Nevada. As in Iowa, the remaining forums are designed to give voters the opportunity to engage directly with the candidates.

In addition to the candidates, a number of leaders and advocates for the multi-racial working class spoke, including a keynote address from Representative Ilhan Omar (MN-05), who recounted the critical contribution of the grassroots organizing of People's Action member organization TakeAction Minnesota to her historic election.



*“We’re not fighting for one election, but for the very soul of our democracy.”*

Mary Kay Henry, President of the Service Employees International Union, stood alongside Fight For \$15 workers and underscored her ambitious [Unions for All](#) proposal, a condition for the two-million member union's 2020 endorsement. Ai-Jen Poo, Executive Director of National Domestic Workers Alliance, called upon the candidates to adopt her organization's proposed [Universal Family Care](#), a policy that Secretary Castro said he would support during the forum.

Instead of delivering stump speeches, candidates were required to answer questions from local farmers, seniors in economic distress, tenants' rights activists, and workers with the Fight For \$15. Each candidate was on stage for over 40 minutes.

Since November 2016, People's Action and its member organizations have focused on building organizing infrastructure in rural areas undergoing economic freefall, where Democratic support between 2012 and 2016 [fell by 11 percentage points](#). They have paid special attention to 28 counties in swing states across the midwest and south that flipped from supporting Obama to Trump. People's Action's member organizations have pledged to turn out 2,829,105 voters; engage 47,310 volunteers; and organize \$6,465,210 for Presidential and down-ballot candidates that are most committed to advancing our People's Platform, run Movement Politics campaigns, and co-govern with movement organizations.

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Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement and Iowa Citizens for Community Improvement Action Fund represent the largest organized, progressive constituency in Iowa with more than 5,100 dues-paying members in all 99 counties in Iowa and has been an Iowa organizing institution since 1975.

Iowa CCI Action is a proud member of People's Action. People's Action is one of the largest and fastest-growing multiracial, people's organizations in the country with 37 member organizations in 27 states and more than a million grassroots leaders. From family farms to big cities, from coast to coast, we're fighting for community over greed, justice over racism, and people and planet over big corporations.

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