

ENDORSEMENT OF BERNIE SANDERS BY SENATOR DONALD W. RIEGLE

Lori and I are here today to support the Presidential candidacy of Bernie Sanders.

Flint, Michigan is now the epicenter of a breakdown of our proper system of local self-government -- where state government overseers from Lansing were imposed here by Governor Snyder. And with their reckless disregard for the health and wellbeing of the people of Flint -- they took steps -- in the name of austerity -- that poisoned our community water supply.

For over two years people of all ages had their health damaged -- with multiple deaths from Legionnaire disease -- and the lives of Flint's children were impaired with lead poison and other toxins. Even now, lead poisoned water continues to contaminate our local water supply. No one can be sure the next glass of water out of the water faucet is actually safe to drink.

The local community leaders -- the mayor, the elected representatives, Congressman Dan Kildee, our two U.S. senators, and outraged citizens are fighting back with all their strength -- but continued foot-dragging by the state government and hostile forces in Congress -- have stalled the emergency steps that need to be taken.

On his visits to Flint Bernie Sanders has met with many injured people and their families. Speaking at Eastern Michigan University he said, " It is beyond my comprehension that in the year 2016 in the United States of America we are poisoning our children."

Later, while meeting with union members of UAW Local 600, Bernie said, " If we can rebuild villages in Iraq and Afghanistan, we can damn well rebuild Flint Michigan."

BERNIE SANDERS' PUBLIC SERVICE RECORD

Looking carefully at his long record of public service -- first as mayor of Burlington, Vermont for 8 years -- then as a House Member in Washington, DC -- and currently as a U.S. senator -- he stands head and shoulders above all the other candidates in either party.

Without question he has the best voting record -- the best and longest history of personal advocacy for equal rights -- human rights -- and economic justice -- of all the candidates. That record -- and the centerpiece of his Presidential campaign -- offer us a vision that can strengthen America -- and begin to rebuild the shrinking middle class in our country.

The most important fact about Bernie is that he is honest and trustworthy. That is an essential differentiator for me.

The starting point in selecting a new President is believing in someone we can trust -- that what they say -- is what they truly stand for -- and not just at election time -- that they will keep their word. He has proven over the decades -- his integrity and trustworthiness is rock solid.

Beyond that -- he has the wisdom and courage to say that our current political system is broken -- and must be fixed.

He has pointed out that our system of financing elections by billions of dollars from the unlimited spending of special interest groups -- and what he terms the "billionaire class" -- has let them buy increasing control of our political system and our economic future. He has pointed out that this poison of special interest money is contaminating our political system -- the same way the poisoned water was sent through our local water system for two years here in Flint -- by the reckless actions and disregard of Governor Snyder's overseers.

This wrongful power is creating government policy for the few -- and blocking the corrective policies needed for the many.

Only Bernie Sanders has refused to create a Super PAC -- refusing to accept the unlimited amounts of special interest money.

And we should note - that the Sanders citizen volunteers won two more states yesterday -- Kansas and Nebraska.

BERNIE SANDERS HAS THE BEST CHANCE TO WIN IN NOVEMBER

I believe Bernie Sanders is by far our strongest Democratic candidate that can actually win the election in November. And the prospect of Ted Cruz or Donald Trump makes that imperative.

The current national polls show Bernie defeating all the Republican candidates, while those same polls show Mrs. Clinton losing to Cruz or Rubio -- and running less well against Trump, than Bernie now does.

Our best bet in November for actually electing a Democratic President -- and protecting the Supreme Court -- is Bernie Sanders.

There is one other crucial aspect of the record that must be mentioned.

It is to look back and do a necessary accounting of the hurtful decisions of the Clinton Administration between 1992 and 2000 -- that were key decisions that badly damaged our country -- which especially damaged the Flint I love -- and so many other industrial-base cities in Michigan and across America.

Two of the most destructive national policies occurred during that Clinton Administration and the third was in 2002-- and the Clintons must be held accountable

DEVASTATING NAFTA TRADE AGREEMENT

Not enough Members of Congress could withstand the internal pressure in 1994 from the Clinton Administration to pass NAFTA -- and instead fight against it -- speak against it -- and vote against it.

Bernie Sanders saw the harm and deceit in the false NAFTA promises and tried to defeat it. I took Ross Perot to the steps of our state capital in Lansing to speak and rally against NAFTA. We knew then it would have a devastating economic effect - destroying US jobs -- especially in Flint -- and many other communities in Michigan.

Over the past twenty years -- the total trade deficit with Mexico has now reached over \$900 billion -- costing us hundred of thousands of American middle class manufacturing jobs.

The Clintons rammed NAFTA down our throats with false promises. That needs to be remembered now. I urge the national press to look around at what has happened here in Flint -- and see with your own eyes - the economic damage and devastation - and the human suffering

IRRESPONSIBLE WALL STREET DEREGULATION

That same Clinton Administration worked to deregulate Wall Street by repealing the historic and vital Glass-Steagall law -- this was another monstrous mistake with far reaching consequences -- letting Wall Street run wild -- which later brought our entire financial system to it's knees. Bernie Sanders saw the dangers -- and fought hard against it.

That later financial market collapse crushed many people and communities across America -- particularly in Michigan -- and right here in Flint.

THE MISTAKEN VOTE TO SEND AMERICA TO WAR IN IRAQ

The third item I must mention is the decision to go to war in Iraq.

The fateful Bush-Cheney Iraq War vote in 2002 -above all others -- was an epic test of judgement -- character -- and courage -- of the Members of Congress serving at that time. It required standing up to the pressure of the military industrial complex -- and the loud beating of the drums of war by Bush and Cheney -- and the neo-cons.

23 Democratic Senators voted against the Iraq War - including both Michigan Senators - Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow.

Ted Kennedy also voted against the war. He called it the most important vote of his

entire 47 years in the Senate.

And the man standing here next to me, Bernie Sanders -- had the good judgment -- and the wisdom -- and independence - to also vote against the Iraq War.

We know our other current Democratic Presidential candidate voted to send America to war in Iraq.

The trillions of scarce dollars spent and wasted in Iraq hurt Flint. That money was urgently needed here in America - to rebuild our crumbling infrastructure here in Flint -- and elsewhere in Michigan - and across the nation.

And worse than that -- countless American lives were lost in Iraq with many returning veterans carrying lifetime wounds and disabilities. And today that whole region of the world is in shambles.

It was a monstrous error of judgment. It has badly wounded America

Elected officials have to be measured by their votes and actions at critical moments -- not their later excuses and blame dodging -- and their poll-tested promises at campaign time.

When people like Carl Levin and Debbie Stabenow -- and Ted Kennedy -- and Bernie Sanders -- did all they could to prevent the ruinous Iraq War -- I cannot support a candidate in this primary who stood up and voted with Bush and Cheney - to send our young men and women to war in Iraq.

Regaining citizen control of our national government

It is almost impossible to take on the special interest domination of our government and set out to rebuild a broken political system. But the longer we wait the worse it gets. Bernie said we have to start. He's right.

It is like ripping out the poisoned lead water pipes here in Flint. They must be ripped out -- and then we will again have pure, fresh water to drink. And we can again restore a national government that works for the people -- by ripping out the polluting influence of special interest money now flowing through and poisoning our national government system

To do this, our Democratic Presidential nominee must understand what needs to be done -- and then must be courageous, independent and determined enough to assemble a citizen army -- and hit it head-on.

But then you need one vital ingredient - that is missing in all the other candidates in both parties.

You have to be trustworthy.

You have to mean what you say -- and have the honesty to live by the words you say.

People have to trust you. Bernie has spent his lifetime - earning and building that trust.

And long before that -- he was a committed civil rights activist as a college student in Chicago.

Bernie is someone who actually was there on the Mall in Washington, DC -- standing up for civil rights - when Dr. Martin Luther King gave his fateful "I Have a Dream" speech.

Throughout his life - Bernie has given personal witness to the fight for human justice - for all our people

Bernie is not a "Johnny come lately" on human justice issues.

The young people of America want their future back. They refuse to become a lost generation

Bernie is showing them that they can use their own individual power to speak -- and organize -- and act together -- with other concerned citizens of all ages and backgrounds to work as a team - to take back their own government -- to break the stranglehold of the special interest money and control.

They are determined to change the direction of America -- to once again pursue a new national path - in behalf of the broad public interest.

Is this idealistic? Yes -- thank God it is.

It was idealism that created America -- and idealism that will now redeem America.