

Bernie Sanders' Support for The Auto Industry Rescue Package

Bernie Sanders has always made clear that he believed that any bailout must include measures to help our important manufacturing sector and boost middle class workers. He [voted in support](#) of [Senate cloture](#) on the auto bailout in December 2008, and [gave an interview](#) detailing the importance of the auto industry to the American economy just days later. Sen. Sanders [argued that](#):

“Here's why you should worry about it. Historically the gold standard for manufacturing workers was the automobile industry. Workers there earned good wages. They had good benefits. They had a strong union. They had a pension program, and so forth. And by raising that standard, it meant that in non-union manufacturing in the state of Vermont, or the state of Arizona, you had a standard by which people had to respond to. And if in your gold standard area wages go down, so that people are entering the automobile industry now making 14 bucks an hour with lower benefits, how do you think people are going to make a living wage working in a non-union shop elsewhere in this country?”

Vermont Public Radio published a story at the time that [wrote that](#) Sen. Sanders said he was “supporting a \$15 billion rescue package for the nation's auto industry.”

The press calling out Hillary Clinton's false claim

In a fact check of the debate, [Politico wrote](#) that Sen. Sanders “did support bailing out the automakers.”

And the [Washington Post wrote](#) that Clinton's attack “glosses over a lot of important nuance, including the fact that Sanders is actually on the record as supporting the auto bailout. He even voted for it.”

The Washington Post even suggested that Clinton is aware she is making a false attack, [writing that](#) “it seems like she's willing to take the gamble that fact checkers may call her out for her tactic Sunday -- but that voters won't.”

Background — Bernie Sanders supporting the auto bailout and manufacturing

November 2008

On November 20, 2008, Senator Sanders said the following at a hearing about “economic outlook and options for stimulus:”

I could tell you that in my state people are furious. People are struggling to keep their heads above water, and the idea of placing at risk \$700 billion of taxpayer money to bail out people on Wall Street who in the past have made just huge amounts of money investing in -- in very reckless, exotic financial packages -- that brings about the issue of re-regulation. It brings about the issue of greed in our society.

Are we in a healthy state when so much money is being played about in the financial sector, while our manufacturing sector is in rapid decline? Doesn't it make a lot more sense to maybe put money into producing products that the American people consume so in fact we don't have to import everything from China, rather than have guys make huge sums of money playing on Wall Street?

[“Sen. Kent Conrad Holds a Hearing on Economic Outlook and Options for Stimulus,” Political Transcript Wire, 11/20/2008]

December 2008

On December 11, 2008, Senator Sanders voted YEA on the cloture motion to proceed to consider the auto rescue package. The motion failed with 52 senators in favor and 35 against.

[\[New York Times, 12/11/2008\]](#)

[\[Senate Roll Call Vote 215, 12/11/2008\]](#)

On December 19, 2008 (the [same day](#) that President Bush announced he would use TARP funds for the auto industry rescue), he spoke to Thom Hartmann about the automotive industry rescue:

[Thom Hartmann]: Yeah. Even their approach to the auto bailout is--you know--we need to drive down wages to make this -- it's a race to the bottom.

[Bernie Sanders]: Thom, that is exactly right and anyone who thinks that a lot of the Republican opposition to this automobile bailout -- when the Republicans defeated it a couple of weeks ago -- didn't have a lot to do with trying to destroy the United Automobile Workers and to in fact drive down wages--which are already plummeting in the automobile industry -- is sorely mistaken.

Now some listeners may say, "Well you know, frankly I don't live in Detroit, I don't make cars -- why should I worry about it?" Here's why you should worry about it. Historically the gold standard for manufacturing workers was the automobile industry. Workers there earned good wages. They had good benefits. They had a strong union. They had a pension program, and so forth. And by raising that standard, it meant that in non-union manufacturing in the state of Vermont, or the state of Arizona, you had a standard by which people had to respond to. And if in your gold standard area wages go down, so that people are entering the automobile industry now making 14 bucks an hour with lower benefits, how do you think people are going to make a living wage working in a non-union shop elsewhere in this country?

And you're quite right--what we're talking about here is a collapse of the middle class. A race to the bottom.

[\[Thom Hartmann, 12/21/2008\]](#)