

Sanders rallies in Dearborn, backed by Arab American community leaders

[Sarah Rahal](#), The Detroit News Published 2:16 p.m. ET March 7, 2020 | Updated 8:29 p.m. ET March 7, 2020

Dearborn — After packing the TCF Center in downtown Detroit Friday night, U.S. Sen. Bernie Sanders jumped to Dearborn Saturday morning, speaking to its large Arab American and Muslim community.

About 900 people, according to Dearborn police, packed into the gymnasium of Salina Intermediate School on Dearborn's south end, where traditional Arab dancers and musicians hyped the crowd before Sanders' half-hour speech.

Before introducing Sanders, Palestinian American comedian and activist Amer Zahr reflected on the man who waved a Nazi flag at the Jewish candidate's rally in Philadelphia Thursday. He called the incident a disgrace and said Dearborn welcomes Sanders with open arms.

"People say, why are all these Arabs supporting the Jewish guy to be president? But they don't understand anything about us, Bernie does. We love everyone ... the motto of this campaign is not me, us," Zahr said. "Dearborn has been the home of new immigrants for over a century. It is where hope starts. We stand here at the crossroads of the fights for legal, racial and environmental justice. Four years ago, they told us he was done... as it turns out, Arab Americans had something to say about that."

Sanders walked out to John Lennon's "Power to the People" saying first, he will fight to end all forms of discrimination in America.

"Every person in this room, it doesn't matter if you're Christian, Muslim, Jewish, whatever you may be, you have the same dreams and aspirations," Sanders said. "Last I heard, everyone needs health care as a human right. Last I heard, everyone wants their kids to get a quality education. Last I heard everyone who turns on the water faucet wants to make sure it's clean, not toxic. ... It's unbelievable.

"Is it possible that people in this area don't have water coming out of their tap? This is absolutely insane and we're going to do everything we can to stop water pollution in Michigan and all over this country."



Supporters of Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders listen and take photographs during a campaign stop for Sanders at Salina Intermediate School in Dearborn on Saturday, March 7, 2020. (Photo: Max Ortiz / The Detroit News)

The school, of 700 elementary and middle school children sits under smokestacks only a few hundred feet away from A.K. Steel's Dearborn plant. The plant, which came under A.K. Steel's management in 2014, has a history of Clean Air Act violations, and in 2015, it was forced to pay a \$1.35 million settlement for pollution caused to the region.

Sanders touted his plan to implement legislation based on principles of the Green New Deal and shutting down [Enbridge Line 5](https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2020/03/06/enbridge-secures-contractors-design-construction-line-5-tunnel/4962392002/) ([/story/news/politics/2020/03/06/enbridge-secures-contractors-design-construction-line-5-tunnel/4962392002/](https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2020/03/06/enbridge-secures-contractors-design-construction-line-5-tunnel/4962392002/)).

"Profits are not more important than the future of this planet and the well-being of our kids and future generations," he said. "We can create up to 20 million good-paying jobs transforming our energy system and we are prepared to stand up to the fossil fuel industry."

Teresa Masiarczyk attended the rally from Ferndale and said she was pleased to hear Sanders address issues that concern her because she used to teach special education at Salina Elementary three years ago.

"The environmental issues and just being a teacher, the rights and pay of teachers, that brings me to support him," said Masiarczyk, 37, who brought her 3-year-old daughter to the rally. "There's a lot of research to show the cancer rates here are really high and I worried about that when I was pregnant and worked there."

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Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders speaks during a campaign stop at Salina Intermediate School in Dearborn on Saturday, March 7, 2020. (Photo: Max Ortiz / The Detroit News)

Sanders used the issue of trade policy as a spear against former Vice President Joe Biden, who's taken the momentum in the race for the Democratic presidential nomination.

Sanders touted his own "100% pro-choice voting record," his vow to take on Wall Street and the pharmaceutical industry. He plans to raise the minimum wage to \$15 an hour, make college tuition-free, relieve student debt and raise the minimum wage of public school teachers to \$60,000.

Sanders also called for immigration reform, "high quality, affordable child care for every family in America" and promoted his Medicare for All health coverage program, calling health care "a human right."

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Dearborn is Sanders' second of five events over four days ahead of Tuesday's primary. About 6,000 people attended his rally in Detroit Friday night. He's headed to a town hall in Flint at 7 p.m. Saturday, then Grand Rapids and Ann Arbor on Sunday.

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Sanders slammed Biden on a variety of issues, alleging Biden had been inconsistent on the subject of abortion over his long political career, late to back gay rights and supportive of "disastrous" trade agreements.

Imam Sayed Hassan Qazwini, leader of the Islamic Institute of America in Dearborn Heights, recalled the year 2000 saying they were deceived by Geroge W. Bush, "who came to us and said he would care about Arab Americans, fight racial profiling... We were stunned and we will not repeat that mistake."

"We need someone who unites Americans, not divides us and that is Senator Bernie Sanders," he said.

Khaled Beydoun, law professor and author of "American Islamophobia: Understanding the Roots and Rise of Fear," has been supporting Sanders since 2016 "because he was the first presidential candidate to condemn Islamophobia and unapologetically champion the civil rights concerns of Muslims."

"While other candidates only spoke about Muslims in relation to terrorism and national security, Bernie humanized Muslims, highlighting how their concerns are not unlike Americans of other religious beliefs. In addition, he makes room for voices from downtrodden communities, and will govern from the bottom-up instead of speaking down to our communities," Beydoun said.

Sanders' asked for Dearborn's votes saying they couldn't beat President Donald Trump with the same old politics.

"To beat Trump, we need the largest voter turnout in the history of the United States of America. We need to reach out to working-class people who are sick and tired of working two or three jobs, making \$12 an hour and are tired of seeing a political system work for billionaires. They want an economy that works for all, not just a few.

"I have no doubt in my mind, we can do it."

Sanders calls himself a democratic socialist.

Republican National Committee spokesman Michael Joyce issued a statement saying, "Sanders' socialist agenda of banning all fossil fuels and eliminating private health insurance will not resonate with voters across the Great Lakes State. Michiganders have no interest in these socialist policies."

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