

June 16, 2016

In October of last year, I became the first member of Congress to endorse Sen. Bernie Sanders for president. My travels with him across the country since then have only strengthened my belief that he would make an outstanding national leader and commander in chief.

During those travels, I saw up close what the pundits have all too often dismissed as a passing phenomenon: a genuine desire for a better, more responsive way of electing our leaders and making policy. This desire – from young voters and old, from working people and retirees, from women and men – is born not of a demand for the impossible, but from a heartfelt conviction that America is ready to live up to its very highest ideals.

Those ideals are the heart and soul of Bernie's campaign, and voters have responded to them in a way that goes deeper than mere support for a candidate. The American people, across the board, support sweeping campaign finance reform, universal health care, affordable college access, and a fairer economy that rewards work instead of just wealth. Bernie made this election about those issues and the values behind them. The country is already much stronger for it.

Those issues and those values transcend any one person. This was more than a campaign for the presidency. It is a movement.

With voting completed in the final Democratic Primary, it is now time for the Democratic Party to unify. For all of us who supported Bernie from the beginning, whether we considered ourselves progressives or independents or just Americans tired of being on the outside looking in, the most important thing now is to beat Donald Trump in November. To use a word that's been thrown around a lot lately, now is the time to unify.

Unity will not be realized if the millions of voters who supported Bernie Sanders feel taken for granted. Our country needs a president who understands why the American people are hungry for something better and more substantial than political trench warfare. That president must be able to channel our hunger into action and our action into results. Tinkering at the margins is no longer an acceptable presidential platform.

Hillary Clinton has the capacity and the instincts needed to carry forward what has been started. I support her and will do what I can to help ensure her victory. I firmly believe that her victory will only come when she and the Democratic Party articulate the themes this movement has so powerfully expressed.

Bernie has pointed the way toward a more humane economy, a more peaceful foreign policy and a stronger support network for Americans of all ages. Those will

be the centerpieces of Democratic governance for the foreseeable future, and we will owe Bernie a debt of gratitude for it.

It won't be enough to just accept the merit of his ideas. This is in no small part Bernie Sanders' party also. His team, his supporters and his movement must – and will – be integrated into the future of the Democratic Party at every level. In many ways this is a new entity. The Democrats who won elections twenty years ago by running against marriage equality, avoiding questions about gun violence, blaming poverty on laziness and waffling on the environment are nearly a thing of the past. From now on, Democrats will celebrate Sandersism and channel its energy not just to electoral victory, but to better decisions for the American people.

At some point, every presidential election is called “the most important in a generation.” This one actually merits the description. Winning in November will require standing arm in arm. I'm ready.