



Written by [Steve Byas](#) on February 8, 2017

## Cruz and Sanders Debate ObamaCare Repeal on CNN

In what was dubbed by some as the “Runner-up Bowl,” Senators Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.) and Ted Cruz (R-Texas) squared off Tuesday night in a debate sponsored by CNN and moderated by Dana Bash and Jake Tapper.

While the two men who finished second in the race for the presidential nominations of the two major parties debated the merits of the so-called Affordable Care Act (ObamaCare), perhaps the exchange precipitated by a question Sanders asked Cruz, and his answer, sums up the debate on the issue of government-directed healthcare and government programs in general.



Sanders asked Cruz if he believed that healthcare was a “right.” Cruz responded by noting that though Democrats such as Sanders like to throw around the word “right” to refer to government programs, in his view, a correct definition of “rights” means “your right for the government not to mess with you.” Cruz pointed to the Bill of Rights, which is a listing of rights, all of which are prohibitions on government taking away our rights that are “unalienable.”

In the area of healthcare, Cruz told Sanders that Americans have a right to “access” to healthcare, but not a right to have it provided by government.

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The 90-minute debate began with Sanders telling the audience what repeal of ObamaCare would “mean,” stating that it would lead to millions of Americans being told, “Forget it.... You are off [coverage].” Sanders claimed that without ObamaCare, those citizens would face the hard choice of either going bankrupt or being forced to spend the rest of their lives paying off huge medical debts.

He added that ObamaCare protects Americans from being rejected by an insurance company because of a “pre-existing condition.” He stated that women are considered to have a pre-existing condition because they have the ability to get pregnant. Sanders concluded his opening statement by asserting that the United States has the only major national government that does not guarantee healthcare “as a right.”

Cruz countered in his opening statement that though “Bernie and the Democrats want government health care,” it works better for a patient to be able to sit down with his doctor, and not have to worry about the long waiting periods one sees in the countries with government-run healthcare.

“We have six years of results” with ObamaCare, Cruz noted — six years of numerous examples of what is wrong with government-run healthcare. He recalled that President Obama pledged 37 times before the passage of ObamaCare that “if you like your plan, you can keep your plan” — and “If you like your doctor, you can keep your doctor. He added that though Obama also promised that insurance premiums would drop \$2,500, they have actually increased by \$5,000, on average.



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Most importantly, Cruz said, ObamaCare has “reduced your freedom.”

It is imperative that ObamaCare be repealed quickly, Cruz insisted, as Republicans promised in multiple elections that they would do. And once it is repealed, he added, healthcare financing will be improved by “increasing competition instead of empowering bureaucrats.”

Sanders mocked Cruz’s invoking of freedom of choice, declaring, “Here’s your choice.” He then painted a grim picture of a person going to the doctor with a health problem and the insurance company refusing to cover it. “Of course we have to improve ObamaCare,” Sanders added, admitting some of its problems that Cruz kept raising. But he stated that his idea of “improving” ObamaCare is to move to a system more like that seen in Canada and the United Kingdom. Canadians have a “single-payer” system in which the government pays for all medical care, and in the United Kingdom the government actually provides all health coverage directly.

Cruz replied that Sanders likes to talk about the profits of insurance companies but noted that in 2008, before ObamaCare, the 10 largest insurance companies had a profit of \$8 billion, but by 2015 the profit of these same 10 companies was \$15 billion. “There’s less coverage, and you’re paying more for it,” Cruz explained.

Sanders countered that the solution was to get private insurance companies “out of our life,” adding that their CEOs receive “outrageous compensation.”

Cruz blamed government for much of the cost of bringing new drugs to market, noting that it takes about \$2 billion to get a new drug approved. He argued that if someone has a life-threatening disease, the government should not be keeping that person from using a life-saving drug. As an example, he noted that in the past 20 years, the FDA has approved only three major child cancer drugs.

Sanders replied that though “Ted and the Republican leaders” want to just leave this problem to the states, he contended that it was the “moral and right thing” for the federal government to take on the problem.

“If Canada, the UK, France and the Scandinavian countries get the healthcare they need, we need to join them,” Sanders insisted, stating that Americans pay more for healthcare than do the citizens of countries with government-run systems.

Cruz responded, “The reason we pay more than the United Kingdom is we have better healthcare and more healthcare” than those countries. However, he contended, In the nations with the government-run systems that Sanders admires, the wait times are much longer, with it taking some patients as much as 95 days just to get a knee replacement. Cruz explained that this is because those countries ration healthcare.

Sanders retorted, “We have enormous rationing in *this* country, because people don’t have the money” to pay for all the healthcare they need. He said his solution is a “public option” — giving Americans the option to buy a government health care plan.

That public-option is “socialized medicine,” Cruz argued, pointing out that under such a regime, one group of people in particular who do not receive the care they need are “seniors.”

Cruz offered an example of the superiority of American medicine over that of Canada, by noting that the governor of one of Canada’s provinces came to the United States in order to get a hip replacement. Continuing his attack upon government-run healthcare, Cruz said that in Glasgow, Scotland, a hospital turned away three women in labor, and in Wales, an 82-year-old woman waited eight hours on the floor



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of her house before an ambulance arrived. Cruz insisted that “every country with socialized medicine uses rationing.”

Sanders suggested that a good solution would be to expand Medicare, which he called a “popular program,” to include all Americans. Cruz, on the other hand, noted that increased competition in healthcare is the better solution. Such a solution would include allowing Americans to buy health insurance across state lines, creating health savings accounts, and making health insurance portable from job to job. Cruz added that he also favors limiting lawsuit abuse, as is done in Texas.

Cruz returned to attacking the problems of ObamaCare, including the mandates that health insurance cover all sorts of things beyond what a person needs. He offered as an example a 101-year-old woman whose insurance policy was cancelled because of ObamaCare regulations, simply because it did not include maternity coverage.

Sanders insisted that the Medicare program should negotiate lower drug prices, while Cruz explained that the “key is competition,” suggesting that the tough FDA barriers to drug imports and more drug companies are a favor to the big drug companies. “I don’t think the answer is wage and price controls,” Cruz said.

In his closing remarks, Sanders told Cruz, “You are on your own” in summing up what he claimed was Cruz’s solution of terminating ObamaCare. Cruz then declared of ObamaCare: “It isn’t working. It was built on an edifice of lies. It was government that messed this [healthcare] all up, and their solution is more government.”

All in all, it was a lively exchange, covering most of the issues involved in the question of the anticipated repeal of ObamaCare.



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