



Written by [Bob Adelman](#) on February 28, 2020

Democrat Superdelegates: Brokered Convention Better Than Bernie

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After interviewing 93 of the 771 superdelegates waiting in the wings to vote on the second ballot at the Democratic National Convention in Milwaukee in July, the *New York Times* [reported](#) that only nine of them support democratic socialist Senator Bernie Sanders for the party's nomination to face Donald Trump in the general election.



Not only does the vast majority not support Sanders, they are willing to risk alienating his supporters by naming someone else — almost anyone else — to challenge the president. That would be the second time in four years that Sanders' supporters will claim that they have been ripped off. The superdelegates are, according to the *Times*, "willing to risk intraparty damage [in order] to stop his nomination at the convention." The paper also "found overwhelming opposition [among them] to handing the Vermont senator the nomination if he arrived with the most delegates but fell short of the [required] majority" to capture the nomination on the first ballot.

One of those superdelegates interviewed, Jay Jacobs, the New York State Democratic Party chairman, said that the superdelegates should choose a candidate they believe has the best chance of beating Donald Trump in the general election in November. On the other hand, Sanders has argued that if he arrives in Milwaukee in July with a plurality of delegates, but not a majority, he should get the nomination. If he doesn't, it would, according to the *Times*, "enrage his supporters and split the party for years to come."

Some speculate that this is going according to a plan originally conjured by former New York City Mayor Michael Bloomberg, whose name never appeared in the *Times* article. That plan, as more are coming to believe, involved so fracturing the party that none of the candidates had a chance to win on the first ballot. It would lead to a brokered, or "contested," convention, where all delegates are relieved of their first ballot pledges and are free to vote for whomever they believe would have the best chance against the president in November.

Nathaniel Rakich, writing for the polling analysis website FiveThirtyEight, has been watching developments closely and reporting daily on the likely outcome. On Wednesday, he wrote about the upcoming Super Tuesday when nearly one-third of Democrats nationwide cast their ballots in primaries: "How good the night truly is for Sanders actually probably rests more on the performance of the other candidates. If several [of them] collect hundreds of delegates, it would set us on a collision course for a contested convention."



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On Thursday, he wrote that “the chance that no one receives a majority of pledged delegates after all states and territories have voted is up near its all-time high of 1 in 2 (49 percent).”

On Friday, Nate Silver, FiveThirtyEight’s editor-in-chief, released the latest result: The chances are that “no one” will win on the first ballot, at 51 percent. Sanders lags behind, at just one chance in three, with Biden fading with only one chance in seven of snagging the nomination on the first ballot.

If that scenario of a brokered convention plays out, then the former mayor of New York City is in the driver’s seat. He is the 500-pound canary: when he speaks, everyone listens. Already being floated for the position as the best candidate to challenge the president are people such as Michelle Obama; Senator Sherrod Brown (D-Ohio); Senator Mark Warner (D-Va.), who is vice-chair of the Senate Democratic Caucus; Senator Chris Coons (D-Del.); and Senator Kamala Harris (D-Calif.), who has already dropped out of the presidential race.

Or perhaps Bloomberg has someone else in mind — a “savior” or a “white knight” — whom he is keeping under wraps until the others have exhausted themselves in back-room wheeling and dealing at the convention.

The overwhelming majority of those interviewed by the *New York Times* agree on this: Sanders is “such an existential threat [to the Democrat Party] that they see stopping him from winning the nomination as less risky than a public convention fight. Many feared that putting Mr. Sanders on the top of the ticket could cost Democrats the political gains of the Trump era, a period when the party won control of the House, took governor’s mansions in deep red states, and flipped statehouses across the country.”

Photo: AP Images

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