



Written by [Jack Kenny](#) on May 14, 2015

O'Malley Back in N.H.; Clinton Still Missing on Trade Debate

Likely Democratic presidential candidate Martin O'Malley was back in the key primary state of New Hampshire Wednesday, one day after the *Washington Post* called Hillary Clinton "missing in action" in the debate that has congressional Democrats united against President Obama over trade policy.

O'Malley, the former mayor of Baltimore and governor of Maryland, spent the day courting Democrats in the state that every four years holds the nation's first Democratic and Republican presidential primaries. He is expected to announce his presidential plans by the end of the month. His entry into the race would make him the third declared candidate for the Democratic nomination, after Clinton and Sen. Bernie Sanders, the Independent from Vermont.



Both Sanders and O'Malley are considered long shots in a Democratic race that many pundits and politicians have all but conceded to Clinton. While expressing "tremendous respect" for both Hillary and former President Bill Clinton, O'Malley made it clear he was not conceding anything to the former first lady, who defeated Barack Obama in the New Hampshire primary in 2008.

"So she did get 39 percent of the vote here last time," O'Malley said in an [interview](#) with the *Concord Monitor*. "My guess is she probably still has that 39 percent."

Clinton, then the junior U.S. senator from New York, captured 39.1 percent of the vote in '08 primary, finishing ahead of then-Sen. Obama and six other candidates, not counting the "Others," who drew 1.1 percent of the vote. Still, O'Malley made his point. Thirty-nine percent is not a majority, and 60.9 percent of Democratic primary voters wanted someone other than Hillary Clinton to be the party's standard-bearer.

"This is not the first time I've gotten into a race with an inevitable front-runner and with very little name recognition," said O'Malley, whose first run for elective office was as a little-known candidate for state senate. He lost to incumbent John Pica by just 44 votes.

"I truly believe that our country is not going to solve problems we confront without new leadership, without talking about our problems and without confronting them," O'Malley told the *Monitor*. "And in my public life, I've always been drawn to the biggest challenges and the toughest fights. And I've never backed down."



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His point on “talking about” and “confronting” problems, might have been a reference to Clinton’s reluctance to speak out for or against the two trade agreements — the Trans-Pacific Partnership trade deal with 11 Pacific Rim nations or the Trans-Atlantic Trade and Investment Partnership — currently being negotiated by the Obama administration. On Tuesday of this week, Senate Democrats handed the president a stinging defeat by blocking a vote on the “fast-track” Trade Promotion Authority that Obama and Senate Republicans wanted in order to expedite passage of the trade agreements when they come before Congress. Under “fast-track” rules, Congress may vote a trade pact up or down but may neither filibuster nor amend it. O’Malley voiced his opposition to the Trans-Pacific Partnership in his New Hampshire visit Wednesday.

“I’m opposed to T.P.P. I don’t know where she stands on that,” he said, referring to Clinton. O’Malley also took a shot at the North American Free Trade Agreement that Hillary’s husband pushed through a lame-duck Congress in 1994.

“There are many that had high hopes for NAFTA back when we did that,” he said. “Instead it caused a lot of dislocation.”

“Ms. Clinton’s dash for the tall grass is transparently inconsistent with the position she embraced as Mr. Obama’s secretary of state,” the *Washington Post* editorial said, citing the support for the TPP that Clinton expressed in an October 2011 article she wrote for *Foreign Policy* magazine. “Our hope is that a TPP agreement with high standards can serve as a benchmark for future agreements — and grow to serve as a platform for broader regional interaction and eventually a free trade area of the Asia-Pacific,” Clinton wrote.

As a presidential candidate for 2016, her few remarks on trade have been couched in generalizations.

“Any trade deal has to produce jobs and raise wages and increase prosperity and protect our security,” she said in a recent visit to New Hampshire.

With competition from both O’Malley and Sanders, who also opposes Obama’s trade policies, the pressure will be on Clinton to abandon her fence straddling and take a stand with or against the president. If she comes out for the trade deals, she risks alienating organized labor and a great many Democratic primary voters. If she comes out against them, she’ll be running against her own record.

Republicans, meanwhile, have contradictions of their own that they studiously ignore. While often voicing scorn and contempt for the United Nations, Republicans as well as Democrats have been willing to expend American lives in military campaigns to enforce UN resolutions — as was the case in the Iraq war. The trade deals Republicans support create supranational regulatory bodies with the power to penalize the United States for legislating limits on trade, something the government has been doing since the early days of the Republic. (See the [Embargo Act](#) and [Non-Intercourse Act](#) of the Jefferson and Madison administrations.)

And with Sen. Majority Leader Mitch McConnell boasting of his cooperative efforts with the president to pass Trade Promotion Authority, the Republican majority in Congress is once again attempting to surrender in advance its power to amend whatever trade agreements come to the House and Senate. They are, in other words, surrendering legislative powers the Constitution has assigned to Congress. (“All legislative Powers herein granted shall be vested in a Congress of the United States which shall consist of a Senate and House of Representatives.” (Article I, Section 1, Constitution of the United States.)

But then, that’s not at all surprising. Whether on matters of war or trade, surrendering its powers to the



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executive branch is what Congress does best.

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