

## COGS, The Caucus, and the Issues

### On the Iowa Caucuses (February 3<sup>rd</sup>):

The Iowa Caucuses are swiftly approaching! COGS recognizes that this will be the first caucus for many of its members, and we encourage being involved in the political process, regardless of your political affiliation or status. Here is some vital information for those interested in caucusing:

A **caucus** differs from a **primary**, which is an early vote for who you want to be on your party's ballot, because it combines voting with interacting with your neighbors and with representatives from various candidates' campaigns. In Iowa, the Democratic and Republican parties both hold caucuses to determine their state party's nomination for President.<sup>1</sup> The statewide winner will not necessarily be the candidate who appears on the party's ballot in November, but as Iowa holds the first caucus or primary in the nation, candidates look to build on support they gain in Iowa to win in other states and secure the party's nomination.

The caucuses are held February 3<sup>rd</sup> at a meeting place within your precinct specific to the party for whom you want to caucus.<sup>2</sup> If you are in line no later than 7 PM, you can caucus at that location, but you should plan to arrive earlier to make your caucus night run smoothly.

### What you need:

If you want to caucus, bring a photo ID.

If you are not a registered voter for the party for whom you want to caucus, you can register at the caucus location, if you provide an ID and proof of residency (This can be a utility bill, bank statement, residential lease, paycheck, or other government document on which your address appears).

At the **Iowa Democratic Party** caucus, counts of supporters are conducted, and candidates who do not have enough support (15% or more of the precinct) will no longer be considered viable candidates for the caucus; their remaining supporters can choose to support a different candidate instead. You can arrive with the intention of supporting a specific candidate, and stay in that candidate's camp (usually a corner of the room or a smaller room off the main meeting hall) throughout the evening. You can also arrive not knowing who you want to support, and talk to people, listen to what candidates' campaigns have to say, and then make up your mind about who you want to support for the final tally at the end of the evening. The final count determines how many delegates will support your candidate at the state party convention (and therefore who has "won" the state party's nomination for the ballot for November's general election). At the end of the Presidential Preference selection, the precinct chooses delegates to the county party convention and discusses party platform (many choose to leave for this section of the caucus).

At the **Iowa Republican Party** caucus, a paper vote is held, without the re-alignment around viable candidates. After the paper vote, a winner is announced, and the precinct chooses

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<sup>1</sup> Only these two parties hold caucuses; however, any eligible voter may register as either a Democrat or Republican to participate in that party's caucus, regardless of their previous or future intended party affiliation.

<sup>2</sup> You can look up your Democratic caucus location at <https://iwillvote.com/locate/?lang=en&state=IA>, and your Republican caucus location at <https://www.iowagop.org/2020-caucus-locations>.

delegates to the county party convention and discusses party platform (many choose to leave for this section of the caucus).

The political process can be complicated, but the nice thing about a caucus is that even though it takes longer and requires more effort than casting a ballot, it allows people to learn about the candidates and discuss candidate preferences with people in their area. Additionally, caucuses allow for those who are not eligible to vote to participate in the process - while only eligible voters are counted in the tallies for each candidate, anyone can attend as a visiting caucus-goer, who can still participate in discussions and observe the process, provided space is available. So, if you are not an American citizen, not an Iowa resident, or otherwise ineligible to vote during that party's caucus, you can still attend the caucus.

### **On COGS and Politics:**

Organizing is an inherently political activity, and COGS is a political organization, with a committee for Political Action. It is the Political Action Committee's prerogative to inform members about the union's political activity, and about political activity in which members can and should engage. Recognizing that COGS is made up of members from a broad base of political backgrounds, we as an organization do not endorse individual candidates. COGS has, however, voted on positions on three issues important to its members as graduate students, workers, residents of Iowa, and beyond. At the December General Membership Meeting on 12/10/19, assembled members voted to approve positions on the three issues below, related to state and national labor law and governance, and healthcare, which had been identified and drafted by the PAC as issues important to COGS and graduate students.

COGS will continue to take political positions on other issues its membership approves, and work to support those positions politically. What follows is a summary of leading candidates' stated positions related to those issues, as can be reliably determined from their campaign's provided issue positions and press statements from the candidates. This does not mean COGS is endorsing any specific candidate's positions on those issues. It is meant to be informational only, and we encourage those interested to research further into the specifics of candidates' positions and campaigns.

Democratic candidates listed below are in the top five in polling in Iowa (according to the Iowa Poll released 1/10/20).<sup>3</sup> No Republican except the incumbent president is polling at 5% or above in Iowa, so only his administration's positions are listed. All candidates are listed in alphabetical order.

### **Issue: Iowa Collective Bargaining Law Changes in 2017<sup>4</sup>**

COGS' Position: "COGS stands opposed to changes in the Iowa state collective bargaining law (Chapter 20) that decided government agencies were not required to negotiate with public

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<sup>3</sup> <https://www.documentcloud.org/documents/6616467-Iowa-Poll-Methodology-011020.html>

<sup>4</sup> In 2017, the Iowa State legislature made changes to the state collective bargaining law known as Chapter 20, which eliminated many bargaining rights for public employees in Iowa, including graduate workers at public institutions like the University of Iowa. The most significant changes were denying these workers the right to bargain for anything other than wages in contract negotiations, and requiring public sector unions to hold a vote prior to contract negotiations to re-certify that employees want the union to bargain on their behalf.

employee unions on topics besides base wages. Changes to Iowa’s labor laws in 2017 have placed unreasonable burdens on the abilities of COGS and other public employee unions to organize and represent workers in the state of Iowa, including requiring expensive and exhausting recertification votes and restricting topics at the bargaining table. COGS supports overturning these revisions to Iowa’s collective bargaining laws.”

**Joe Biden (Democrat - Former VP and Senator):**

In a speech to the Iowa AFL conference in August 2019, Biden recognized the efforts of the Republican-trifecta state government in turning back labor rights, declaring that Iowa was “on the front lines” of this fight because of the changes made in 2017.<sup>5</sup> Per Biden’s website, he would “Provide a federal guarantee for public sector employees to bargain for better pay and benefits and the working conditions they deserve,” by championing the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 6238).<sup>67</sup>

**Pete Buttigieg (Democrat – Mayor of South Bend, IN):**

In a campaign news release in July 2019, Buttigieg chided the 2017 legislation curtailing worker rights, and proposes ensuring public and private sector workers have the same bargaining rights.<sup>8</sup> Per his website, Buttigieg strongly supports the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 6238).<sup>9</sup>

**Amy Klobuchar (Democrat - Senator from MN):**

At the Iowa AFL-CIO’s annual convention in August 2019, Klobuchar denounced the 2017 changes gutting rights for public-sector workers, pledging to repeal “right-to-work” laws like Iowa’s. Per Klobuchar’s website, she was a co-sponsor of the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 6238), and would sign it into law.<sup>10</sup>

**Bernie Sanders (Democrat<sup>11</sup> – Senator from VT):**

Sanders supports ensuring collective bargaining rights for public employees. At an AFL Conference in Iowa in August 2019, he said, “We will essentially repeal the disastrous chapter 20 law that took away those rights in Iowa by a Republican governor and that legislature.”<sup>12</sup> Per his website, Sanders states that he would sign the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 6238) into law.<sup>13</sup>

**Donald Trump (Republican – Incumbent President):**

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<sup>5</sup> <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/post/15-presidential-candidates-address-iowa-labor-leaders#stream/0>

<sup>6</sup> <https://joebiden.com/empowerworkers/>

<sup>7</sup> [https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Public%20Service%20Freedom%20to%20Negotiate%20Act%20\(August%202018\).pdf](https://edlabor.house.gov/imo/media/doc/Public%20Service%20Freedom%20to%20Negotiate%20Act%20(August%202018).pdf)

<sup>8</sup> <https://fox42kptm.com/news/local/pete-buttigieg-launches-workers-rights-policy-ahead-of-iowa-visit>

<sup>9</sup> <https://peteforamerica.com/policies/empower-workers/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://medium.com/@AmyforAmerica/senator-klobuchar-on-standing-up-for-our-workers-and-unions-442ba8b2678b>

<sup>11</sup> Sanders affiliates as an Independent for his Senate seat, but is running for the Democratic party nomination for president.

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.iowapublicradio.org/post/15-presidential-candidates-address-iowa-labor-leaders#stream/0>

<sup>13</sup> <https://berniesanders.com/issues/workplace-democracy/>

The Trump administration has made no statements specifically regarding the change in Iowa collective bargaining laws, but the changes were the direct result of his party gaining complete control of the Iowa Legislature in 2016.

**Elizabeth Warren (Democrat – Senator from MA):**

At the Iowa AFL-CIO convention in August 2019, Warren joined fellow candidates in condemning the 2017 changes curbing collective bargaining rights for public employees.<sup>14</sup> Per her website, Warren supports guaranteeing public sector workers have a right to organize, pledging to pass the Public Service Freedom to Negotiate Act (H.R. 6238).<sup>15</sup>

**Issue: National Labor Relations Board (NLRB) 2019 Decision<sup>16</sup>**

COGS' Position: "COGS opposes the NLRB's 2019 decision, standing in solidarity with our fellow graduate employees at private colleges and universities, whose right to unionize is being taken away. Graduate workers are employees and as such have every right to unionize. Universities and colleges – private and public - work because we do."

**Joe Biden:**

While Biden's campaign has not issued a specific statement about the 2019 decision, his website states Biden would appoint NLRB officials who support workers' right to organize and collectively bargain. The 2016 ruling that decided graduate workers at private universities do have the right to unionize, also known as the Columbia Decision, was passed by the Obama administration-appointed NLRB; Biden was Vice President under Barack Obama. In December 2019, Biden tweeted in solidarity with striking graduate students at Harvard (HGSU-UAW).<sup>17</sup>

**Pete Buttigieg:**

Buttigieg has not issued a specific statement about the NLRB decision regarding graduate student workers, though he has in several outlets suggested his appointees to the NLRB would tackle worker classification generally.<sup>18</sup> In December 2019, Buttigieg tweeted in support of striking graduate workers at Harvard (HGSU-UAW).<sup>19</sup>

**Amy Klobuchar:**

Klobuchar was among the thirteen Democratic senators who wrote a letter opposing the NLRB's proposal, dated 1/15/20. The letter reads in part, "The NLRB's proposal to deny students in higher education their rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NRLA or Act) will harm

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<sup>14</sup> <https://cbs2iowa.com/news/local/democratic-candidates-appeal-to-union-workers-at-iowa-labor-event>

<sup>15</sup> <https://elizabethwarren.com/plans/empowering-american-workers>

<sup>16</sup> In September 2019, the NLRB announced its intent to classify graduate workers at private institutions as students only, without the right to form unions. The Board describes the relationship between students and institutions as "predominantly educational, not economic," and therefore graduate employees should not have rights as workers. The rule is expected to go into effect in early 2020, despite vocal opposition from organized labor, pending potential legal action from various quarters.

<sup>17</sup> <https://twitter.com/JoeBiden/status/1202028242187771904>

<sup>18</sup> <https://www.politico.com/story/2019/07/26/how-pete-buttigieg-would-expand-workers-rights-1621927>

<sup>19</sup> <https://twitter.com/PeteButtigieg/status/1202032206916595714>

working students, many of whom already struggle to attend class, maintain a job, and pay for the extraordinary costs of higher education.”<sup>20</sup>

### **Bernie Sanders:**

Sanders was among the thirteen Democratic senators who wrote a letter opposing the NLRB’s proposal, dated 1/15/20. The letter reads in part, “The NLRB’s proposal to deny students in higher education their rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NRLA or Act) will harm working students, many of whom already struggle to attend class, maintain a job, and pay for the extraordinary costs of higher education.”<sup>21</sup> In December 2019, Sanders tweeted in support of striking graduate students at Harvard (HGSU-UAW).<sup>22</sup> On January 22, 2020, Sanders introduced the “Respect for Graduate Student Workers Act”, which would prohibit the NLRB from enacting the proposed rule stripping graduate students of the right to unionize.<sup>23</sup>

### **Donald Trump:**

Trump’s appointees dominate the NLRB which made this decision, a reversal of a 2016 ruling that declared student workers are in fact employees with collective bargaining rights.

### **Elizabeth Warren:**

Warren was among the thirteen Democratic senators who wrote a letter opposing the NLRB’s proposal, dated 1/15/20. The letter reads in part, “The NLRB’s proposal to deny students in higher education their rights under the National Labor Relations Act (NRLA or Act) will harm working students, many of whom already struggle to attend class, maintain a job, and pay for the extraordinary costs of higher education.”<sup>24</sup> In November of 2019, Warren as part of the Massachusetts congressional delegation wrote a letter to Harvard’s president in support of Harvard’s graduate student union (HGSU-UAW) in its contract negotiations with the University.<sup>25</sup> In December 2019, Warren tweeted in support of striking graduate students at Harvard (HGSU-UAW).<sup>26</sup>

### **Issue: Healthcare<sup>27</sup>**

COGS’ Position: “Recognizing that health care is a human right, and that health care should exist independently of a worker’s employment, COGS supports Medicare for All, or any similar universal health care system that ensures universal coverage with no payment at point of service.

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<sup>20</sup> <https://www.help.senate.gov/ranking/newsroom/press/murray-democrats-slam-nlrb-proposal-to-strip-students-employed-by-private-universities-of-workplace-rights>

<sup>21</sup> <https://www.help.senate.gov/ranking/newsroom/press/murray-democrats-slam-nlrb-proposal-to-strip-students-employed-by-private-universities-of-workplace-rights>

<sup>22</sup> <https://twitter.com/BernieSanders/status/1202014220696588290>

<sup>23</sup> <https://www.sanders.senate.gov/newsroom/press-releases/senator-sanders-introduces-bill-to-protect-graduate-student-workers-right-to-unionize>. As of 1/27, the bill had been read into the record, and referred to the Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions.

<sup>24</sup> <https://www.help.senate.gov/ranking/newsroom/press/murray-democrats-slam-nlrb-proposal-to-strip-students-employed-by-private-universities-of-workplace-rights>

<sup>25</sup> <https://www.thecrimson.com/article/2019/11/30/bacow-garber-strike-response-letters/>

<sup>26</sup> <https://twitter.com/ewarren/status/1201920579072405504>

<sup>27</sup> Healthcare is a complicated issue, and many candidates have issued detailed plans regarding the matter. What follows is a simplified summary of candidates’ approaches to the question of Medicare for All or similar universal health care system, as that is the position COGS has voted to support. For more information, visit the links provided to candidates’ websites.

It is COGS' position that guaranteed health care, independent of employment, would ensure workers' relationship with their employers did not determine their access to health care.”

**Joe Biden:**

Biden opposes Medicare for All, but would expand coverage. According to his website, he supports restoring and building on the Affordable Care Act, emphasizing universal access but not universal coverage with no payment at point of service.<sup>28</sup>

**Pete Buttigieg:**

Buttigieg opposes Medicare for All, but would expand coverage. According to his website, his plan is “Medicare for All Who Want It,” which emphasizes access to care and affordability, but not universal coverage with no payment at point of service.<sup>29</sup>

**Amy Klobuchar:**

Klobuchar opposes Medicare for All, but would expand coverage. According to her website, her plan is to achieve universal health care through a public option that expands Medicare or Medicaid, and changing the Affordable Care Act to bring down costs, but not universal coverage with no payment at point of service.<sup>30</sup>

**Bernie Sanders:**

Sanders supports Medicare for All. According to his website, Sanders states that health care is a human right, and he promotes a single-payer national health insurance program, with comprehensive health care coverage, free at the point of service.<sup>31</sup>

**Donald Trump:**

The Trump administration seeks to replace the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (“Obamacare”) with a promised “phenomenal” health care plan, the details of which remain unclear, but in the meantime intends to continue using executive authority to “reduce barriers to more affordable options for Americans and U.S. businesses”.<sup>32</sup>

**Elizabeth Warren:**

Warren supports Medicare for All. According to her website, Warren states that health care is a basic human right, and she outlines a transition period to move to a comprehensive Medicare for All, single-payer national healthcare system with no charge at point of service.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> <https://joebiden.com/healthcare/>

<sup>29</sup> <https://peteforamerica.com/policies/health-care/>

<sup>30</sup> <https://amyklobuchar.com/issue/health-care/>

<sup>31</sup> <https://berniesanders.com/issues/medicare-for-all/>

<sup>32</sup> <https://www.whitehouse.gov/issues/healthcare/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://elizabethwarren.com/plans/m4a-transition>