

US Presidential Race: For Meet the Press, Bernie Sanders Is He Who Must Not Be Named

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Sen. Bernie Sanders announced his candidacy for the Democratic presidential nomination last week—but Meet the Press’s Chuck Todd, who’s “obsessed with elections,” didn’t seem to notice. (cc photo: Paul Morigi/Brookings)

Meet the Press host Chuck Todd can’t seem to get enough of the 2016 presidential race. Yet the one major candidate who announced he was running last week—Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders, an independent who declared on April 30 he was running for the Democratic nomination—was strikingly ignored on Meet the Press’s May 2 broadcast.

It’s not that the broadcast didn’t have time to talk about the 2016 race. One of the show’s guest was Martin O’Malley, brought on to talk about the Baltimore protests as former mayor of Baltimore and former Maryland governor, but also as someone “weighing a bid for the Democratic presidential nomination”: “Do you think you can still run on your record, as mayor of Baltimore and governor of Maryland,” Todd asked him. “Do you think this is a positive thing that voters will look at...?”

Todd closed his interview by saying: “We’ll see you, you’ll probably announce in Baltimore.” But we didn’t see anything about the candidate who [actually announced](#) that week in Washington, DC.

Afterwards, Todd had a brief discussion (labeled “nerdscreen time”) of an NBC/Wall Street Journal poll of voter priorities: “For Democratic primary voters, the number one issue is job creation and economic growth followed by health care and climate change.” As it happens, these are all issues that Sanders has [put at the center](#) of his campaign—but Todd made no reference to his candidacy.



Chuck Todd not talking to House Speaker John Boehner about Bernie Sanders on Meet the Press.

Then Todd ended his interview with Republican House Speaker John Boehner by saying, “Let me have a little bit of fun with you on presidential politics,” then asking a series of six questions, none of which produced a substantive response—from “You are a big fan of Jeb Bush, but you haven’t endorsed, why?” (“Well, I’m not going to endorse anybody”) to “When I say Hillary Clinton, what do you say? Give me a word or phrase. First thing that comes to mind” (“Listen, I don’t have a word for her. Former secretary of State”) to “Cruz, Paul, Rubio... Do they have enough experience?” (“It will sort itself out over the next year”).

Todd introduced the final panel discussion segment of the show by declaring that “we are going to have another big week of presidential announcements coming up”:

Carly Fiorina is expected to announce tomorrow. The former Hewlett-Packard CEO will make the announcement online, and then she takes questions via Twitter’s livestreaming app Periscope.

Baltimore native Ben Carson also announces tomorrow. He’ll do so, though, in Detroit, not Baltimore.

Mike Huckabee will announce his presidential candidacy Tuesday in his hometown of Hope, Arkansas. That’s right, the same hometown as Bill Clinton.

So that’s three mentions of candidates who are going to announce—but no reference to the candidate who really did announce in the previous week. (Sanders did not get his announcement previewed the week before on Meet the Press; in fact, Sanders hasn’t been mentioned on the show since September 14, 2014, when he made his [only guest appearance](#) on the show.)

Todd continued:

And by the way, there is a fourth candidate that’s been in the news this week. Chris Christie’s presidential ambitions are, well, shall we say floundering after two key allies were indicted and another plead guilty over the Bridgegate mess.

At this point, the show has mentioned 12 people who are running for president—none of them the one person whose candidacy had been declared in the previous week.

After this introduction, Todd declared, “Let’s talk a little quick 2016 with the panel”—leading a conversation that brought up Carson, Fiorina, Huckabee, Christie, Hillary Clinton, O’Malley—and Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren, who has repeatedly insisted she is not running for president. Wall Street Journal editorialist Kimberley Strassel asserted that Clinton “is so worried about Elizabeth Warren getting into the race and [Clinton] is moving left, left, left, left.” Meanwhile, the name of the candidate who is [running to Clinton’s left](#)—not hypothetically, but in reality—was never mentioned.

It’s worth noting that Meet the Press did not ignore Sanders because he’s so much more obscure than the other candidates who were mentioned. Not that polls taken more than nine months before the first vote will be cast have much validity, but in [four national opinion polls](#) taken in the month before he announced his candidacy, Sanders averaged 6 percent of the vote—as opposed to O’Malley, who averaged 2 percent. In the Republican race, Todd was

previewing the announcement of Fiorina, who's averaging 1 percent in polls, albeit in a more crowded field.

Campaign pundits often use fundraising ability as a measure of the seriousness of a candidate. Sanders [raised](#) a surprising \$1.5 million in the 24 hours after his announcement, in increments that averaged under \$50. By comparison, Kentucky Sen. Rand Paul raised \$800,000, Texas Sen. Ted Cruz \$1 million and Florida Sen. Marco Rubio \$1.25 million in their first official day of campaigning.



Bernie Sanders: ignored on Meet the Press, but a featured guest on This Week.

Todd introduced the last topic of the day by saying, "I'm obsessed with elections, as people know"—and launching into a 400-word discussion of the race for British prime minister between Labour's Ed Milliband and Conservative David Cameron.

What were the other networks doing with their Sunday shows? CBS's Face the Nation devoted its broadcast to the Baltimore protests, [featuring](#) media-anointed poverty expert Rep. [Paul Ryan](#) (R.-Wisc.).

And the [main guest](#) on ABC's This Week? Sen. Bernie Sanders, discussing the announcement of his candidacy for the Democratic nomination.

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