

# [Socialism in america today](https://assignbuster.com/socialism-in-america-today/)

Socialism in America

In America today, there is a negative stigma that has arisen as aresult of mainly the cold war that has had several detrimental effects on thecountry. This is something that affects American citizens and policy makers whocreate new legislation. Many of these people will vehemently oppose the idea ofsocialism but will take advantage of socialist principles already implementedin American society. It is important for America to become informed on thevarying different forms of socialism and how some forms of it, such as thedemocratic socialism that Bernie Sanders promotes, can provide beneficialsocialist principles while also allowing for a free-market capitalisticeconomy. Educating the American citizenry on this issue would allow for them toproperly elect officials in the future who may consider themselves associalists.

For a lot of people, socialism is only consideredin terms of being its own political party like the socialist party or the communist party. However, any political party can contain aspects of socialism without having “ socialism” in the name of their political party. Although socialism has never been only one thing, Schneirov says that “ it has always had ethical, utopian, and ideological dimensions” (Schneirov). In America, socialism evolved alongside capitalism, thus creating a society which merges the two together. Socialist leaders such as Karl Marx have wanted to transcend a capitalist society altogether and completely end class divisions. Most others, however, do not wish for such a revolution to take place but rather have a good mix of the two (Schneirov). A good example of this being Bernie Sanders; a presidential candidate who outspokenly supports democracy and a free market while also argues for socialist principles. Mainly ones that involve forcing those in the country who are the richest to pay their fair share of taxes and give their fair share to help the standard of living for all of Americans to rise.

One important distinction that needs to be made is that there are many different forms of socialism that profess very different views on how society should be run. Although socialism has several unchangeable tenets, such as “ public ownership of the means of production and distribution,” all other aspects of this view are up for debate. Michael Harrington, in his book “ Socialism: Past and Future,” says that for socialism to prevail at all in the twenty-first century, its large diversity and complexity must be understood and recognized (Harrington). Donald Busky does a good job of defining and making a distinction between these various types of socialism in his book, “ Democratic Socialism: A Global Survey.” He goes into depth on utopian socialism, Marxism, social anarchism, communism, and democratic socialism; all different forms of socialism that vary widely. Forms of socialism like Communism are devoid of democracy and are usually associated with totalitarianism or a dictatorial rule. However, other forms of socialism like democratic socialism combine “ the ideas of liberal-democratic government with that of social ownership and control of the economy” (Busky).

Socialism has received a negative stigma throughout the years, mainly during the cold war (Bump). This stigma has remained over the years and has had several detrimental effects on America. Being called a socialist has even become an insult in America, when in reality it could be a beneficial thing to be a socialist. Mark Leibovich, an author for The New York Times , points out that conservatives have been using the terms “ socialist” as an insult in his article titled “’Socialism!’ Boo, Hiss, Repeat”. He even argues that the push for socialism is something that is returning after laying dormant for a while now. He points out how John McCain, a candidate who fought with Obama for the election of president, even accused Barack Obama of desiring to “ spread the wealth,” a major tenet of socialism (Leibovich). Although Obama has indeed implemented several different socialist based pieces of legislation, this legislation has been beneficial to the country. For example, he implemented a new health care system that has provided coverage for many Americans that lacked the coverage before. Regardless of benefits of socialism such as Obama’s health care reforms, many people still look at socialism as if it is always a negative thing that should be avoided at all costs. This is because many do not know of the many different forms of socialism that exist. Many people believe that socialism is just one thing with no diversity. Different forms of socialism can range from utopian socialism, where wealth is distributed equally to everyone and there is no chance of working up the chain of economic classes, to democratic socialism, where billionaire’s wealth is used to help keep the lower class out of poverty and make public education free for those who could otherwise not afford it. In a democratic socialist economy, people can still work hard to bring themselves up the economic class ladder. Some forms of socialism, such as communism, include a command system where the government controls almost every aspect of the economy, while others allow for a free market.

Although many people are unaware, there are several aspects ofsocialism that are already present in modern day America (Walter). One of themost obvious examples of this being the government health care system. This isa system that is already implemented in American society. It is a program thatis subsidized by taxpayers. This means that those who receive this health careare not required to pay the full price from it as society collectively helpsfoot the bill for it, even if they do not use the service. This allows thosewho are financially unable to pay for health care that they may need to receiveproper health care. This is part of a common aspect of socialism which involvesspreading the wealth in the country around (Rose). Barack Obama, the currentpresident of the United States, has already implemented socialist based healthcare legislation called Obamacare. The official name of this act being thePatient Protection and Affordable Care Act. Cheryl Chumley, an author for TheBlaze , wrote an article titled “ Obamacare Ruling Solidifies Socialism inAmerica.” The title of this article does a good job of summing up exactly how Obamacarehas influenced health care. In this article Chumley quotes Obama who said that“ we finally declared in America health care is not a privilege, but a right forall” (Chumley). These are sentiments that are shared by Bernie Sanders, aself-proclaimed socialist.

There is even a push in the nation to implement universal healthcare, a system that has been implemented in many other western industrializedcountries. This means that everyone in the country would automatically receivehealth care, regardless of their financial status.

Another common aspect of socialism in America is corporatewelfare. This is something that is not as common knowledge as government healthcare as it does not directly affect the citizenry to the same effect as healthcare does. This involves corporations that receive financial support from thegovernment to prosper through things such as subsidies. Rose discusses how thiscan be seen through the oil industry and how the American government immenselyhelps the oil industry prosper. He even goes as far as to say that it is nolonger necessary for the American government to be doing this anymore as theoil industry is clearly prospering immensely and many industrialized countriesdepend on it for many of their utilities (Rose). This is an example of asocialized industry that almost everyone relies upon and use every day, yetmany still scoff at the idea of socialism when it is brought up inconversation.

There is a plethora of utilities that are subsidized by taxpayer’s money that are then made usable by the public. This allows everyone ina community to contribute a certain portion of their finances to provide basicutilities to everyone, even those who would not possess the money to partake inthe use of the utilities without this system. This is an idea that has beenaround for almost the entire duration of America and is a basic socialistprinciple, just like the governmental health care. These things help to raisethe standard of living for the entire community. Rose lists only a few of theseutilities that most people take advantage of. He lists military expenditures, highways, a rail system, postal service, and air traffic control (Rose).

Even though all of these utilities are made possible throughsocialist legislation, there is a negative stigma that exists in America withwhat seems to be a majority of the citizenry. Many people have a veryill-informed opinion on the matter and do not understand exactly what socialismcan look like and how it can benefit a society. This stigma originated mainlyduring the cold war. During this era, America vehemently fought to containcommunism in the areas that it was already located and tried to keep it fromspreading to other reasons. This becomes a problem because many people conflatesocialism and communism as if they are the same thing. Donald Trump, a currentRepublican presidential candidate, has made it clear that he conflates the twothrough his comments towards Bernie Sanders, a self-proclaimed democraticsocialist. Trump has called Sanders a “ socialist” and a “ communist” when it isevident that he does not advocate Communism and has never claimed to. In moderntimes, this stigma is mostly associated with the Republican Party, with theDemocratic Party generally being more accepting of the idea. This is obviouslynot completely exclusive to either side though.

This stigma that has arisen against socialism through the cold warcan have several detrimental effects on the country. One area that could sufferfrom this stigma that was discussed earlier is the health care system. Manypeople do not want to “ socialize” this vital system and make it available toeveryone in the country. This could possibly lead to people not getting theproper health care that they need because they cannot afford the care and theycannot afford the proper health insurance to cover it. Many European countrieshave already implemented a universal health care system and it has led to manymore individuals getting the health care that they need, even if they are notlucky enough to possess the funds to pay for it. In America, the health caresystem is still just an industry that many people use to make money and it hasled to some lower class people being unable to get proper health care. JohnBarro points out in his article titled “ Bernie Sanders, Democratic SocialistCapitalist” that Bernie Sanders wishes to make Medicare something that is freefor all, and a right freely granted to everybody. This would make the federalgovernment the sole insurer. Barro points out that this is clearly somethingthat a democratic socialist would endorse (Barro).

Bernie Sanders, a self-proclaimed democratic socialist running forpresident, has received very varying responses to his title of “ socialist.” Ithas been beneficial for him in the way that he has received a large amount ofattention that he may not have received otherwise. However, many people havebeen swayed from supporting him because of it even though they may support alot of the policies that he proposes. The large grey area that is present whenit comes to socialism allows for Bernie Sanders to be a socialist but alsostill advocate for the free-market capitalist economy that is seen in Americacurrently. According to Busky, “ democratic socialism combines the ideas ofliberal-democratic government with that of social ownership and control of theeconomy.”

A very common response to Bernie Sanders democratic socialism isthat people will deny that it is even socialism. For example, in the articletitled “ The Money Illusion: Bernie Sanders’ Silly ‘ Socialism,” the authorcondemns Sanders for using the term socialism. He claims that Sanders is eitherignorant or eccentric and should refer to himself as a social democrat instead. He argues that Sanders does not know what it truly means to be a socialist andpoints out that he views socialism as a system that works in opposition tocapitalism (“ The Money Illusion: Bernie Sanders’ Silly ‘ Socialism”). Peoplelike the author of this article do not understand the vast diversity betweendifferent socialist ideologies that are all still part of socialism. They onlysee socialism as a form of Communism or a society in which wealth is spread outentirely and there is no ability to climb in economic class. George Will makesthe claim that Bernie Sanders is not a socialist. Will makes the arguments thatthe term socialism has become so diluted that everyone is basically a socialistand supports what is today known as socialism in America (Will). This however, does not invalidate Sanders claim to be a democratic socialist. He still hasplans to redistribute the wealth and help spread some of the money from thewealthiest to those who are truly in need of it. Josh Barro, an author for TheNew York Times, hits the nail on the head in his article titled “ BernieSanders, Democratic Socialist Capitalist.” He points out how Sander’s use ofthe word “ socialist” to describe himself has caused a lot of confusion. This isobviously partly due to the fact that most Americans are unaware of what exactlythis can mean. Barro points out that Sanders strives for a mixed economy “ wherecapitalist institutions are mediated through taxes and regulation.” He stillendorses a capitalistic economy, like his democratic opponent Hillary Clintondoes; he just wants more taxes and regulation (Barro). However, Barro doesstill point out his grievances with Bernie Sanders referring to himself as asocialist. He argues that the aspects of Bernie Sanders campaign that Sandersdeems to be “ socialist” are things that most other candidates embrace withoutneeding to use the term “ socialism.” He even ends the article by saying that hehopes “ Mr. Sanders is not too offended if I simply describe him as “ veryliberal”” (Barro).

Bailey Ethier has an article titled “ Bernie Sanders’ ideas are asridiculous as Donald Trump’s;” a title that speaks for itself. Ethier arguesthat these two candidates have a lot in common, even though Donald Trump andBernie Sanders are in different parties and have strongly condemned each otherfor their proposed policies. She argues that Sanders socialist ideas are justas crazy as Trump’s idea of building a large wall on the southern border of theUnited States and making Mexico pay for it. The policy that Ethier focuses onspecifically is Sanders plan to make tuition at public universities free. Heplans on taxing Wall Street for this. Ethier argues that this would not footthe entire bill and that Sanders is crazy for believing that this is achievable(Ethier). Even though this socialist measure has been achieved in othercountries, the United States deficit and population exceeding 350 millionpeople are definitely barriers that need to be overcome.

Reactions have, however, not been entirely negative to BernieSander’s form of socialism. Joseph Schwartz discusses how Sanders has drawncrowds of thousands of people to his rallies, to an extent greater than anyother candidate has. Schwartz points out how many of his supporters are of theyounger generation. This is because this demographic of people were not aliveor old enough to comprehend the stigma that was formed against socialism duringthe Cold War (Schwartz). They are looking at the policies that Sanders proposesthrough a view that is less bias than those who were around during the Cold Warand mistakenly conflate socialism and the communism that the United Statestried to contain and stop from spreading.

The most important thing to focus on is educating the American citizens on the vast differences that arepresent in socialism and highlight the socialist principles that are already present in America. This is something that is very important and a problem that is not taken seriously or even acknowledged by most people. Bernie Sanders is a good example of a candidate that can be a socialist and still advocate for a free market capitalistic economy like the one present in America today. This issue is also one that is very important for upcoming elections. Many people hear that Bernie Sanders is a socialist and are immediately turned away by this without actually considering the changes that he plans to make. Hopefully educating the citizenry with the possibilities of socialism when used correctly would allow for the proper people to be voted into office. Even beyond this, it is important to look past these terms like “ socialism” and “ capitalism” and really look at the specific views and tenets of different candidate’s campaigns. Basing one’s vote solely on whether or not a candidate refers to himself as a socialist or not unnecessarily divides the electoral constituency and creates a distinction that need not exist.

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