

AP FACT CHECK

# In Democrat debate, when 'free' isn't free

An occasional look at political claims that take shortcuts with the facts or don't tell the full story.

By **JOSH BOAK** and **CALVIN WOODWARD**  
Associated Press

WASHINGTON — When does “free” cost a lot of money?

It's when presidential contenders Hillary Rodham Clinton and Bernie Sanders pitch plans for free college tuition, playing down the cost to taxpayers and brushing past assorted other perils to the education system, as happened in the Democratic debate.

A look at some of the claims Tuesday night and how they compare with the facts:

**CLINTON:** “My plan would enable anyone to go to a public college or university tuition-free. You would not have to borrow money for tuition.”

**SANDERS:** “Make every public college and university in this country tuition-free.”

**THE FACTS:** Free for the students, but someone has to pay.

Clinton and Sanders both would shift more college costs onto taxpayers and away from parents and students.

Sanders' plan would cover tuition and fees at public universities — a \$70 billion



AP Photo/John Locher  
**Hillary Rodham Clinton, right, and Sen. Bernie Sanders, of Vermont, speak during the CNN Democratic presidential debate Tuesday, Oct. 13, 2015, in Las Vegas.**

annual expense with the federal government picking up two-thirds of that tab by taxing trading in the financial markets.

Students would still be on the hook for room and board costs that average \$9,804, according to the College Board.

The Clinton plan is bound to cost more than the \$35 billion per year over 10 years projected by her campaign. This is because more students would probably switch to public universities on the potential to graduate without debt, raising costs for the

government and potentially leaving many modestly endowed private institutions in the lurch.

The potential of a debt-free education would also depend on states providing reliable money streams and controlling costs — both major sources of uncertainty. But the Clinton and Sanders plans would also expose a sharp generational divide. New college students would be helped, but the 40 million Americans who already owe a combined \$1.2 trillion in education debt would

receive little aid other than refinancing at lower rates.

Neither candidate told TV viewers about the costs to the treasury of what they propose.

**CLINTON on her email practices:** “I have been as transparent as I know to be. ... I said I have answered all the questions.”

**THE FACTS:** Clinton has yet to explain how the server was set up and serviced, whether she informed the State Department about her decision to use the private system and, most important, how it was protected from

hacking attempts.

Russia-based hackers tried at least five times to trick her into infecting her computer system with malware in 2011, The Associated Press learned, and her server was hit by attempted cyber intrusions in 2014 from China, South Korea and Germany.

Her server also was connected to the Internet in ways that made it more vulnerable to hackers. But her campaign has repeatedly declined to address these details.

**SANDERS:** “Almost all the new income and wealth is going to the top 1 percent.”

**THE FACTS:** Sanders appears to be relying on outdated data. In the first five years of the economic recovery, from 2009 through 2014, the richest 1 percent of Americans captured 58 percent of income growth, according to Emmanuel Saez, a University of California economist whose research Sanders uses. While certainly a large gain, that is a lot less than “almost all.”

In just the first three years of the recovery, from 2009 through 2012, the richest 1 percent did capture 91 percent of the growth in income. But part of that outsized gain came because the wealthiest pulled income forward to 2012 in advance of tax increases that took effect in 2013.

But part of that occurred because of impending tax increases on the wealthiest Americans that took effect in 2013.

Many companies paid out greater bonuses to their highest-paid employees in 2012 before the higher tax rates took effect. Those bonuses then fell back in 2013. And in 2014, the bottom 99 percent finally saw their incomes rise 3.3 percent, the biggest gain in 15 years.

**CLINTON on the Trans-Pacific Partnership:** “I did say, I hoped it would be the gold standard” of trade agreements.

**THE FACTS:** Clinton did not say anything about mere hope in her speeches around the world in support of the trade deal. She roundly endorsed the deal taking shape.

In a November 2012 speech in Australia, she declared the Trans-Pacific deal “sets the gold standard in trade agreements,” a sentiment she echoed in many venues.

Clinton said in the debate that when she looked at the final agreement last week, “it didn't meet my standards.”

The final agreement, however, dropped or changed some provisions that liberal activist groups — the wing of the party she is assiduously courting at this stage of the campaign — had strongly criticized.

## Iran sends fighters to Syria, escalating its involvement

Associated Press

BEIRUT — Hundreds of Iranian troops are being deployed in northern and central Syria, dramatically escalating Tehran's involvement in the civil war as they join allied Hezbollah fighters in an ambitious offensive to wrest key areas from rebels amid Russian airstrikes.

Their arrival, a regional official and Syrian activists said Wednesday, highlights the far-reaching goals of Russia's military involvement in Syria. It suggests that, for now, taking on Islamic State extremists in eastern Syria seems a secondary priority to propping up President Bashar Assad.

The development is almost certain to increase pressure on Western-backed rebels, who are battling multiple foes, and push more civilians out of the areas of fighting, potentially creating a fresh wave of refugees.

Russia began its air campaign Sept. 30, and Syrian troops and allied militiamen launched a ground offensive against rebels in central Syria a week later. Russia says its airstrikes are meant to weaken the Islamic State group and other “terrorists” in Syria, but Western officials and Syrian rebels say most of the strikes have focused on central and northern Syria, where the extremist group does not have a strong presence.

The official, who has deep knowledge of operational details in Syria, said the Iranian Revolutionary Guards — currently numbering around 1,500 — began arriving about two weeks ago, after the Russian airstrikes began, and have accelerated recently. The Iranian-backed group Hezbollah has also sent a fresh wave of fighters to Syria, he told The Associated Press.

Iranian and Syrian officials have long acknowledged Iran has advisers and military experts in Syria, but denied there were any ground troops. Wednesday's statements were the first confirmation of Iranian fighters taking part in combat operations in Syria.

The main goal is to secure the strategic Hama-Aleppo highway and seize the key rebel-held town of Jisr al-Shughour in Idlib province, which Assad's forces lost in April to insurgents that included al-Qaida's Nusra Front.

The loss of Jisr al-Shughour, followed by the



Alexander Kots/Komsomolskaya Pravda via AP  
**In this photo taken Oct. 10, Syrian army personnel fire a cannon in Latakia province, about 12 from the border with Turkey in Syria.**

fall of the entire province, was a resounding defeat for Assad, opening the way for rebels to threaten his Alawite heartland in the coastal province of Latakia. The official suggested the Syrian army's alarmingly tenacious position around that time is what persuaded the Russians to join the fray and begin airstrikes two weeks ago.

The Syrian government and Iran had been asking Russia to intervene for a year, the official said, speaking on condition of anonymity because he was not authorized to discuss military affairs. He said the Russian “tsunami wave” has given allies such as Iran the cover to operate more freely in Syria.

His account of Iranian troops arriving ties in with reports from Syrian opposition activists, who reported a troop buildup in the northern provinces of Idlib and Aleppo. The Syrian Observatory for Human Rights also reported Wednesday that Iranian troops were arriving and being transported to a military base in the coastal town of Latakia, in the town of Jableh outside the provincial capital.

At least two senior Iranian commanders were killed in Syria in recent days, including Gen. Hossein Hamedani, a senior Revolutionary Guard commander, who died Oct. 8 near Aleppo.

“Syria will witness big victories in coming days,” said Gen. Mohammad Ali Jafari, chief of Iran's Revolutionary Guard, speaking Monday at Hamedani's funeral.

“Sending more troops from Hezbollah and Iran only increases the shelf life of the Syrian regime, which is destined to end,” Maj. Jamil Saleh, the leader of Tajammu Alezzah, a CIA-backed Free Syrian Army faction, told the AP. “It will only add more destruction and displace-

ment.”

He said their presence in Syria is not new, but has been kept quiet.

“Now they are taking cover behind Russia since it is a super power and strengthens their position,” Alezzah said.

The Syrian army began its offensive a week ago against rebels on three major fronts in areas between Idlib and Hama. To the north, the Islamic State group capitalized on the strikes against rebels in northwestern and central Syria to capture a string of villages and a main military base from insurgents that brought them closer to Aleppo, Syria's largest city.

“They took advantage of the vacuum,” said Lt. Colonel Ahmed Saoud, commander of 13th Division, a rebel group that is part of the Free Syrian Army. The group is a staunch IS opponent and operates in Aleppo.

J.M. Berger, a nonresident fellow at the Brookings Project on U.S. Relations with the Islamic World, said the moderate rebels “are in a pretty bad spot, unless the West is prepared to sponsor them over the long term in a full-on proxy war against the Russians.”

Such support would be “a complicated proposition,” he added, given that a lot of the materiel the U.S. has sent to moderate rebels has ended up in the hands of jihadists.

Mathew Henman, head of IHS Jane's Terrorism and Insurgency Centre, said the Russian airstrikes against more moderate, nationalist elements of the opposition has facilitated IS territorial gains in these areas, ultimately “leaving the government and its allies principally in a conflict with hard-line, fundamentalist actors.”

A week into the multi-pronged offensive, insurgents say they are overstretched, exhausted and their ammunition is depleted.

### BRIEFLY

#### Attacks continue, Israeli army begin deploying troops

JERUSALEM (AP) — Hundreds of soldiers fanned out in cities across Israel on Wednesday and authorities erected concrete barriers outside some Arab neighborhoods of east Jerusalem in a stepped up effort to counter a monthlong wave of Palestinian violence that has seen near daily attacks.

Despite the escalated security, two assaults were reported Wednesday — the stabbing of a 70-year-old Israeli woman outside a crowded Jerusalem bus station and the attempted knifing of police officers outside the Old City.

The enhanced measures came as Israel struggles to contain the spiraling violence and Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu faces heavy pressure from hard-liners in his governing coalition to stamp out the attacks. The Palestinians called the new measures “collective punishment” that would only enflame tensions.

The military's deployment of six companies to back up thousands of police marks the first implementation of steps approved by Israel's security Cabinet early Wednesday, which also include stripping attackers of their Jerusalem residency rights and demolishing assailants' homes. The Cabinet also authorized police to impose closures on centers of friction and incitement in Jerusalem.

Israel has been unable to stop the attacks, carried out mostly by young Palestinians apparently acting spontaneously with

no affiliation to or backing from organized militant groups. That, coupled with the frequency of the attacks, which have killed eight Israelis this month, including three on Tuesday, has unnerved Israelis.

#### Big 3 airlines ask government: Shield us from competition

WASHINGTON (AP) U.S. airlines have ramped up an aggressive lobbying campaign that seeks nothing less than converting the government from industry regulator to business ally.

The big three legacy carriers Delta, American and United want the Obama administration to protect them from competition from foreign airlines, arguing those rivals can undercut ticket prices thanks to government subsidies or cheaper labor.

At the same time, the U.S. airlines want Congress to roll back or forestall rules aimed at protecting consumers. One is a requirement that airlines show ticket buyers the full cost of fares, including taxes and fees, instead of burying the information in fine print.

The lobbying already has been effective.

At the urging of the big three and the Air Line Pilots Association, 262 House members and 22 senators wrote the administration asking for a freeze in the number of flights to the U.S. now allowed for three Persian Gulf airlines Emirates, Etihad and Qatar and discussions with the United Arab Emirates and Qatar about whether those airlines are violating aviation treaties with the U.S.

#### Police: Brothers were beaten in church to make them confess

NEW HARTFORD, N.Y. (AP) — Two teenage brothers were brutally beaten in church — one fatally — in an effort by their parents, sister and other members to get them to confess their sins, police said Wednesday in a case involving an insular congregation that had sparked gossip and suspicion among neighbors.

Police said spiritual “counseling” at the Word of Life church in upstate New York turned into an hours-long attack Sunday night in which Lucas Leonard, 19, and his 17-year-old brother, Christopher, were pummeled with fists and kicked. They suffered injuries to the abdomen, genitals, back and thighs.

Eventually, Lucas stopped breathing and relatives took him early Monday to a hospital, where he died, police said. Authorities went to the church and found his younger brother, who was hospitalized in serious condition.

“Both brothers were subjected to physical punishment over the course of several hours, in hopes that each would confess to prior sins and ask for forgiveness,” Police Chief Michael Inserra said.

The brothers' parents, Bruce and Deborah Leonard, were charged with manslaughter in Lucas' death. Four other adults were charged with assault in the younger brother's beating, including Sarah Ferguson, 33, the victims' sister.

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