

# OPINION

## Spending promises made by Democratic candidates



JOHN STOSSEL  
Columnist

The Iowa Caucus, the real start of the 2020 presidential primaries, is next week. Who's favored to win? Sadly, as I write this, the smart money says it's the candidate who's promised Americans the most "free" stuff.

Six months ago, my staff and I tallied the candidates' promises. All wanted to give away trillions – or more accurately, wanted government to tax you and spend your money on the candidates' schemes.

At that point, Sen. Kamala Harris led. Fortunately, her promises did not bring her sustained support, and she dropped out.

Unfortunately, now the other candidates are making even more promises. So, it's time for a new contest.

My new video ranks the current leading candidates by how much of your money they promise to spend. We divide the promises into four categories:

### Education

Joe Biden would make community college free, cut student loans in half, increase Pell Grants and modernize schools.

Added to his previous campaign promises, he'd increase federal spending by \$157 billion per year.

Elizabeth Warren would spend much more. She wants government to "provide universal child care for every baby in this country age 0 to 5, universal pre-K for every child, raise the wages of every childcare worker and preschool teacher in America, provide for universal tuition-free college, put \$50 billion into historically black colleges and universities ... and cancel student loan debt for 95 percent of the people."

She'd outspend Biden – but not Bernie Sanders. Sanders would forgive all student loans – even for the rich. He also demands that government give everyone child care and pre-K.

Mayor Pete Buttigieg also promises free child care, more pay for teachers, more career education, free college and Pell Grants, plus the refinancing of student debt.



Mark Makela / New York Times

**Presidential candidate Bernie Sanders has proposed nearly \$5 trillion in new spending.**

Good try, Pete, but Sanders "wins" in the education category, with nearly \$300 billion in promises.

### Climate

All the Democrats pretend they will do something useful about climate change. Biden would spend \$170 billion per year, Buttigieg \$150 billion to \$200 billion and Warren \$300 billion. Sanders "wins" this category, too, by promising more than \$1 trillion.

### Health Care

Even the "moderate," Biden, now wants to "build out Obamacare" and to cover people here illegally.

So does Buttigieg – but he'd spend twice as much on it.

Warren complains the Buttigieg plan "costs so much less" than her plan. She'd spend \$2 trillion a year.

Sanders is again the biggest spender. He'd spend \$3 trillion of your money on his "Medicare for All" plan.

### Welfare

In this category, Biden, to his credit, plans no new spending.

But Buttigieg has been cranking out lots of new promises, like \$45 billion for "affordable housing" and \$27 billion to expand Social Security payments *beyond* what people paid in.

Warren would also spend more on "affordable housing" and give kids more food stamps.

Sanders "wins" again. He promises to guarantee everyone a job, provide "housing for all" and give more people food stamps.

### Miscellaneous

Then there's spending that doesn't neatly fit into major categories, like Biden's plans for new foreign aid for Central America, Sanders' high-speed internet, Buttigieg's expanding national service programs like the Peace Corps and Warren's plan to force government to buy only American-made products.

Finally, we found a spending category that Sanders doesn't win. With \$130 billion in new plans, Biden wins the "miscellaneous" round.

And what about that incumbent Republican?

Donald Trump once talked about "cutting waste," but government spending rose more than half a trillion dollars during his first three years.

Now Trump wants \$267 billion in new spending for things like infrastructure and "access to high-quality, affordable childcare."

At least Trump wants to spend less than Democrats.

Biden and Buttigieg would double Trump's increase. Warren would quadruple it.

But Bernie Sanders blows them all out of the water, with nearly \$5 trillion in proposed new spending!

He'll probably win in Iowa next week. Whoever wins... taxpayers lose.

*John Stossel is the author of "No They Can't! Why Government Fails – But Individuals Succeed."*

## Past treasures uncovered in attic storage containers

By Jase Graves

SYNDICATED COLUMNIST

A long time ago in a toy box far, far away...

As a young urchin in the 1970s, when I wasn't risking radiation poisoning and a diabetic coma from sitting too close to the TV with an enormous bowl of Fruity Pebbles, I could usually be found in my room playing with my official Kenner Star Wars toys. These memories recently came flooding back like a river of Tang Instant Breakfast Drink when my dad bequeathed to me two large Sterilite storage containers chock-full of my old Star Wars toys that had been fermenting in his attic for the past few decades.

I still remember being 7 years old and waiting in line with my parents and big brother to see the first Star Wars movie – that's "Episode IV: A New Hope" to all of my fellow dweebazoids out there. Although I'm pretty sure I went to sleep at some point during the film, Chewbacca's luxuriant fur coat and Princess Leia's cinnamon bun hairdo (among her other features) made a permanent impression on me.

As soon as Kenner released its original wave of toys, including a fully endowed Leia, I succumbed to the injected-plastic side of the force. I eventually had the complete set of characters, and when the sequel came out, along with more toys, I was a hopeless Jedi junkie, blowing every cent of my tooth-fairy cash on action figures. My dad was even enlisted in my obsession, touring the retail establishments of the greater East Texas area in search of the elusive Tauntaun – an alien creature from "The Empire Strikes Back" that looks like the love child of the GEICO hump day camel and Rex from "Toy Story."

My prized possession during those years was the original Millennium Falcon toy, complete with a battery-powered button that made a sound like the ship had an embarrassing case of gas. However, the



Kevin Fujii / Houston Chronicle

**Jase Gaves and his father scoured the greater East Texas area in search of the elusive Tauntaun – an alien creature from "The Empire Strikes Back."**

legendary Falcon, like so many of my other vulnerable playthings, fell victim to a power more sinister than Emperor Palpatine himself – namely my dearly departed toy poodle, Fluff. Along with savagely dismembering several of my action figures, Fluff inflicted singular abuse upon the Falcon.

On one fateful afternoon, when I had docked the Falcon on my bedroom floor without its canopy lid, Fluff raised his leg and scored a direct hit right inside the main cargo hold and lounge. Fortunately, I was able to defunk the ship with a little Pine Action Lysol, and any residual damage actually added to its battle-tested appearance.

Despite the random canine vandalism and general deterioration from the ravages of time (and not just on me), I've had a great time reliving my boyhood by refurbishing my Star Wars collection. The restoration process began by washing the toys in our seldom-used, off-brand whirlpool tub. I actually considered getting in the bath with them to play for old times' sake,

but with the vast numbers of plastic figures, parts, and pieces floating around in there, I worried I might accidentally give myself a Stormtrooper suppository.

I now have the toys on display in my nerd nook at home, and I'm busily spending my three daughters' college savings on eBay purchasing replacement stickers, spaceship parts, and even the rare Yoda cloak – since Fluff undoubtedly digested the original sometime during the Carter administration. Occasionally my wife catches me just standing there and staring wistfully at the toys, making "Pew! Pew!" laser sounds under my breath.

At those times, she just smiles, shakes her head a little, and goes to the kitchen to mix me up a tall glass of Tang.

*Graves is an award-winning humor columnist from East Texas. His columns have been featured in Texas Escapes magazine, The Shreveport Times, The Longview News Journal, and The Kilgore News Herald. Contact Graves at susanjase@sbcglobal.net.*

### LETTER TO THE EDITOR

## Communities need to work together on flood mitigation

To the editor,

The Zen master instructed a student to bring him some tea. The student dutifully went to the kitchen and prepared the tea. Soon the student returned with a teapot and saucer on a tray. The master picked up the teapot and poured tea into the cup. Soon the cup was full, but the master kept pouring. The tea spilled onto the saucer, then onto the tray, and then onto the floor. "Master, Master, what are you doing? You're spilling the tea." The master responded, "Yes, so I am. What is the lesson?" The confused student stam-

mered that he did not know. "Okay, then. Return the tea to the kitchen and clean up this mess. Then I will give you the lesson." The student returned and sat cross-legged before the master. Soon the master provided his lesson: "a full cup will hold no more tea. Come back to me, when there is room in your cup to listen and learn."

We all have heard so many spins of why the lake should or should not be lowered seasonally. I think everyone involved is looking at a full cup of tea, and more information or spinning of data is not leading to any new understanding

of the issues at hand.

The Lake Conroe protest that has developed is not being funded by big business or an angel investor. This is being funded by concerned citizens who are all working together and making their voices heard. If this was just about boating on the lake, we would not have had over 7,000 sign the petitions to Governor Abbott nor would we have had close to 1,000 show up at the last SJRA board meeting. What we are energized about, is that we feel we have been misled by the SJRA and our politicians, and our opinions are not being heard.

We are suffering damage to the lake's economies and the environment. We do not have the engineering studies that support that this is a viable solution both for the residents of the lake and to those residents in the Kingwood Lake Houston area.

The first two years we tolerated this to allow for dredging. Now we are seeing that there is a whole new list of issues that are being used to continue this action without the SJRA being accountable for the damage this is creating. There is no end in sight for this plan.

To all those in the King-

wood / Lake Houston Watershed, we feel your losses and do not wish your flooding issues to be made worse. We also share in your anger with the City of Houston, and how it has managed your recovery. Why has it taken so long for any real relief efforts to be funded, and that actually work? The seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe has been galvanized as an action that will stop your flooding issues. Unfortunately, it will not do this.

The engineering studies must be completed all the way to include your communities. That information would give us a reason to

change or continue our course of action. Economic and environmental impact studies need to be done to assess the damage that the seasonal lowering of Lake Conroe is producing as well.

If the engineering studies show that this is an effective solution, we will stand by and support you. We can stop the flow of tea on the floor when we take a step back and understand this issues that have filled up our teacups, to the point they are overflowing.

We need our communities to work together.

*Al Heilman MD*

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