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[Final Democratic Presidential Debate Before the Iowa Caucuses](#)

The leading Democratic candidates for the 2020 presidential election took the debate stage in Des Moines, Iowa this week for the final time before the first votes of the election campaign are cast. The candidates on stage were: Vice President Joe Biden, Tom Steyer, Senator Bernie Sanders, Senator Elizabeth Warren, Mayor Pete Buttigieg, and Senator Amy Klobuchar. Tuesday's debate had the fewest candidates on stage of any Democratic debate to date, with candidates both dropping out and failing to meet the requisite polling and fundraising targets to be included. Notable absentees were Senator Cory Booker of New Jersey who recently dropped out of the race; Andrew Yang who did not meet the requirement to poll at 5% in four separate polls; and Mayor Mike Bloomberg, who is not accepting political donations and therefore did not meet the requirement to receive contributions from 225,000 unique entities.

For the first time, the debate began with the candidates being asked about their positions on foreign policy and the military. Predictably, there was a split between the moderates and the progressives on the stage, with Vice President Biden, Mayor Buttigieg, and Senator Klobuchar championing the former, and Senators Warren and Sanders the latter. Senator Warren argued in favor of pulling all American troops out of the Middle East and ending what she termed the "forever wars" in the region. Vice President Biden pushed back on that, and voiced his support for leaving special forces teams in the Middle East in order to combat ISIS and other regional terror organizations. Mayor Buttigieg highlighted his experience in the military as a determining factor in his proposed policy to keep Americans out of harm's way, unless there was an imminent threat to the United States. Tom Steyer focused his speaking time on climate change, and said that the climate would be his number one priority if elected, and his foreign policy would be directly connected to combating climate change. One subject in which all the candidates agreed on was multilateralism, and the importance for the United States to use its allies and international organizations to achieve diplomatic solutions to problems in foreign policy.

Another major talking point during the debate was health care. Tuesday's debate followed the example of previous events, with Senators Sanders and Warren championing Medicare for All, while the other candidates supported versions of Obamacare and public options. Senator Sanders was sharply criticized by Senator Klobuchar, who said the American people had a right to know exactly how much his proposed Medicare for All plan would cost. Sanders has yet to provide an exact number on this, instead saying people would save money by not having to pay insurance premiums. Mayor Buttigieg and Vice President Biden were forced to ward off attacks on their proposed health care plans, with Senator Warren criticizing them as being "too small." The argument on health care was the most impassioned topic of the debate, and showed the widening gap between the progressive wing of the Democratic Party and its moderate members.

The candidates were cordial to each other throughout this week's debate, and declined to directly criticize each other for the most part, instead focusing on promoting their own ideas. The exception to this came when Senators Warren and Sanders had conflicting recollections of an event that allegedly occurred in 2018. Senator Warren alleged that Sanders had made a comment to her saying that a "woman couldn't win the election." Sanders refuted that he had ever said that, and pointed to the fact that Hillary Clinton won the popular vote by three million votes in the 2016 election. Sanders also reiterated that he would support any candidate that came out of the Democratic field, regardless of who they were.