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Warren canvassers ramp up statewide advocacy in final stretch before Super Tuesday

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by Angela Yang

Canvassers for Sen. Elizabeth Warren’s presidential campaign swept through various Boston neighborhoods the weekend before Super Tuesday in a statewide get-out-the-vote effort.

Supporters bundled up and brandishing blue “Warren” picket signs gathered as U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley kicked off the weekend with an address Friday afternoon in City Hall Plaza. On the final day of early voting, the group assembled beside the entrance of the City Hall’s polling station.

Pressley, who officially endorsed Warren last November, said in her speech she did not freely give the senator her support — instead, Warren earned it through tangible action.

Pressley referenced the Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, a brainchild of Warren’s that she realized into a U.S. agency in 2011, more than a year before she was elected to public office.



U.S. Rep. Ayanna Pressley speaks to Sen. Elizabeth Warren supporters at City Hall Plaza Friday as the campaign ramped up canvassing efforts before Super Tuesday. ANGELA YANG/ DAILY FREE PRESS STAFF

“She created this agency to ensure justice for those who have been victimized by these predatory practices, and to protect consumers going forward,” Pressley said. “Now she did that when she wasn’t even an elected official, and we know what she’s done as our senator so imagine what she could do as our president.”

Warren speaks Pressley’s love language, she said. And that love language is policy.

“I’m so tired of people coming into any of our communities pledging to be a savior. I don’t need anyone to save me,” Pressley said. “What I want is a partner. Somebody that actually listens and then responds with the policies that will improve my quality of life.”

When asked about Sen. Bernie Sanders’s lead over Warren in her home state, Pressley responded that the campaign is “built to last” and will take nothing for granted.

“And, you know, I’m not surprised that Bernie’s doing well here,” Pressley said. “If Bernie does well, it’s because progressive values and ideas are doing well and I commend him for that and that’s a victory for all of us.”

Standing on the steps before Pressley and Warren’s campaigners were a line of four Massachusetts Peace Action advocates propping up a poster delineating the U.S. war budget in bold red text: \$738,000,000,000.

One anti-war advocate, 29-year-old Steve Powell of Somerville, said the group does not currently support any one candidate, but is simply attending as many election events as possible to seek answers from all the 2020 presidential contenders on how they plan to address the federal war budget.

“We’re not here to take an antagonistic stance towards the senator, but we just want her to give more specifics about how she would cut the military budget, direct that to other priorities,” Powell said. “Would she cut the \$46 million budget for nukes? Would she cut the new cruise missile or the new bomber?”

The following day, Pressley spoke to campaigners again as part of two canvassing initiatives across Boston.

The Congresswoman first appeared Saturday morning at the Boston for Warren Headquarters with Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey for the citywide canvass kickoff.

“She is more than a good professor,” Pressley said of Warren, to a room of about 200 attendees. “She is a damn good student, a student of the people. And that is what informs her empathy.”

Pressley repeated this point when she later visited supporters at Dudley Cafe in Roxbury. Warren, she said, encourages Pressley to hold her accountable and to ask her tough questions.

“When we agree, there’s no one that fights harder. And when we disagree there’s no one that fights harder,” Pressley said. “She stays at that table even when there’s daylight, and she keeps listening and she keeps learning.”

After the day's Boston events, Warren's Massachusetts State Director Jossie Valentin said in an interview she had hoped Warren would run in 2016 and already knew she would stand behind her if the senator were to announce a 2020 bid.

"She's extremely approachable. The empathy that comes from her is unbelievable," Valentin said. "And she's just been a phenomenal advocate for us as a state in terms of getting things done in the Senate."

Sunday saw two more canvassing events in Boston with elected officials. This time, both were held at private locations with smaller gatherings of campaigners.

City Councilor Kenzie Bok of District 8 invited canvassers into her Beacon Hill home and sat them around a dining room table with snacks set out.

Standing in the doorway of the intimate space, Bok delivered a short, informal address to motivate campaign volunteers before discussing canvassing strategies.

Bok said in an interview she first met Warren when she was running for U.S. Senate.

"[I] was really impressed then with her combination of intelligence and commitment and warmth," Bok said. "I think sometimes that's undersold about Elizabeth Warren, just how much feeling she has for people and how big of a heart she has and how much that motivates the really sharp, excellent policy work that she does."

While the polls show Warren and Bernie as close contenders for Massachusetts frontrunner, Bok said she believes Warren is more electable because she can meet the progressive aspirations of Sanders supporters yet also reach into more centrist communities.

"But I think that the passion that's behind Sanders is based on the real feeling of: it's not going to just be enough to win, you have to have enough vision to transform the country," Bok said. "And so I really identify with that. I just identify with it as a Warren supporter."

Later that afternoon, U.S. Sen. Ed Markey and Massachusetts Rep. Liz Miranda made an indoor appearance in Dorchester to speak briefly about their support for Warren before heading out to knock on doors along with the other canvassers in the room.

"We are out here not agonizing, we are organizing to make sure that Elizabeth wins this election here in Massachusetts on Tuesday," Markey said to supporters. "This race is still wide open."

Markey then introduced Miranda, who represents the 5th Suffolk District, one of the largest Black and Hispanic communities in the state.

"I'm a supporter of Elizabeth Warren," Miranda said. "She's the president we need to unite the party. She works on issues like myself of criminal justice reform, maternal justice, immigrant rights and environmental justice. And so we're here saying

she still has a pathway to win.”

Throughout the weekend, canvassers shared their motivations for braving the cold to volunteer for Warren.

77-year-old Ben Siegel has been a South End resident for more than 50 years, and had canvassed around the neighborhood for Warren when she was first running for senator. Siegel said what stands out most about the candidate is that she’s “incredibly smart” and understands complex systems.

“She was the first one to really articulate the need for early child care, because of the wealth gap the economic disparities between the rich and the poor in a lot of working-class people,” Siegel said. “And for 48 years, I served most of the poor and working class people of Boston as a pediatrician. And I know the stresses associated with that.”

Amy Mahler, 31, of Fenway said Warren initially appeared on her radar when she began advocating for the CFPB, but had also seen the candidate around during her Senate campaign days.

“I’ve seen her walk her dog and be with her husband Bruce,” Mahler said. “And she was just somebody who was always very friendly and kind in the neighborhood.”

Mahler said she became one of the earliest volunteers for Warren in that 2012 Senate race.

“She’s just been somebody who I’ve always responded to,” Mahler said. “She’s somebody who is thoughtful and decisive and action-oriented and has well thought-out policies and really believes in making sure that she makes promises that she can back up. And I really love that about her.”

Dorchester resident Kelley Ready, 63, said she is impressed by Warren’s intelligence and candidness.

“She really will work to make things better for us regular types,” Ready said. “Not for the wealthy and the billionaires, but for everyone.”

While candidates like Sanders espouse many of the same progressive values, Ready said she’s been waiting to see a woman in the Oval Office.

“I think Bernie’s great. My friends and I are all sort of like seesawing back and forth between who we want, but I want a woman,” Ready said. “I really want to have a woman, particularly in this time where the wars that we’re fighting have a lot to do with gender issues.”



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