



## Sanders: No, America is Not a Compassionate Society

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During the confirmation hearings of Rep. Tom Price for the cabinet position of Secretary of Health and Human Services, Sen. Bernie Sanders criticized the American society as "not particularly compassionate" compared to other countries on earth.

The exchange occurred when Sanders, a socialist who came close to securing the presidential nomination of the Democratic Party in 2016, asked Price if health care was "a right of all Americans whether they're rich or poor." Price began his response by saying, "Yes, we are a compassionate society..." but he was abruptly interrupted by the Vermont senator who launched into a mini-monologue about America's lack of compassion:

*"No we are not a compassionate society. In terms of our relationship to poor and working people our record is worse than virtually any other country on earth. We have the highest rate of childhood poverty of any other major country on earth and half of our senior, older workers have nothing set aside for retirement. So I don't think compared to other countries we are particularly compassionate."*

It was nearly boilerplate material from Sanders' stump speech but it's the kind of rhetoric that could easily find its way into most of his Democrat colleagues' talking point on any given day. But is it accurate?

According to a report by Daniel J. Mitchell at the [CATO](#) Institute, it couldn't be farther from the truth. In his essay *Americans Are Far More Compassionate than "Socially Conscious" Europeans* Mitchell argues that as a society no other country comes close to America's compassion:

*So how does the United States compare to other nations? Well, I'm not a big fan of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, but the bureaucrats in Paris are quite good at collecting statistics from member nations and producing apples-to-apples comparisons.*

*And if you look at rates of "voluntary private social expenditure" among nations, it turns out that Americans are easily the most generous people in the developed world. People in*

*the United States are so generous that their voluntary giving amounts to 10.2 percent of gross domestic product. The only other nations that even crack 5 percent of GDP are the Netherlands, Canada, and the United Kingdom.*

*Most of the supposedly compassionate welfare states have dismal levels of charitable giving. Voluntary social expenditure in major European nations such as France, Germany, Italy, and Spain averages less than 2 percent of GDP.*

*It's also worth noting that these numbers actually understate the charity gap between Americans and folks from other nations. Economic output in the United States is about 30 percent higher than it is in the rest of the developed world, so charitable giving by Americans actually represents a much bigger slice of a much bigger pie.*

Perhaps Sanders only measures a society's generosity based on the forced confiscation of wealth and the redistribution of it by the government, but if that's the case, it would certainly be more accurate for him to say that America does not have a compassionate *government*, if that is his belief. But, the CATO report blasts away at that argument as well. According to the same data from 2013, America "redistributes 20 percent of GDP in America compared to an average of 21.9 percent of GDP for all OECD nations."

Price did finally get a chance to respond to Sanders. "If you want to talk about other countries' health care systems, there are consequences to the decisions they've made," he said. Indeed.