

Write-In Campaign Seeks Victory for Biden in New Hampshire

January 22, 2024 **by Dan McCue**



A yard sign encouraging Democratic primary voters to write-in the president's name. (Photo by Dan McCue)

CONCORD, N.H. — President Joe Biden’s name will not appear on the New Hampshire Democratic primary ballot on Tuesday, but a statewide grassroots effort is nevertheless determined to sweep him to victory.

Biden chose not to actively run in New Hampshire after the Democratic National Committee revamped its primary calendar, bestowing the coveted “first-in-the-nation” status on South Carolina.

When New Hampshire Secretary of State David Scanlan balked at the idea, citing a state law that mandates New Hampshire be first, Biden opted out of running in the Granite State in solidarity with the party.

From these ashes — with an inadvertent assist from Robert F. Kennedy Jr. and Rep. Dean Phillips, D-Minn. — a massive write-in campaign was born.

“What we’ve got here is a New Hampshire primary that’s unlike any other on the Democratic side, and yet, the fact that we’re doing a write-in is like, the most New Hampshire thing ever,” said one of its organizers, speaking on background.

Though they like to portray themselves as a “ragtag group of volunteers,” many of those involved in the effort are elected Democratic officials, mostly on the state level, and activists ordinarily involved in other issues.

“I think if there’s one thing that unites everybody — beyond our belief that Joe Biden has been a great president — it is that we take civic responsibility really seriously here in New Hampshire,” our organizer said.

“I also think there’s a sense of ‘It’s primary time in New Hampshire; this is what we do,’” he added.

Phillips and
author
Marianne
Williamson,
both actively
running in New
Hampshire for
months,
strongly object
to Biden’s lack
of participation
in the contest.

Another significant write-in campaign on
Tuesday. (Photo by Dan McCue)

Over the weekend each accused Biden of taking the state and its voters for granted and expecting them to hand him a victory in a contest the DNC has said is “meaningless.”

“I truly believe that democracy dies without debate,” Phillips said. “I certainly believe that this country would be better served if all of us were on the debate stage introducing ourselves on a level playing field.

“I mean, how can you run for president of the United States and deny voters the chance to measure you against your opponents?” Phillips said before a crowd of several hundred gathered in a senior center in Nashua, New Hampshire.

“Joe Biden is taking you for granted,” he said. “I think it’s time the Granite state took him for granted.”

Addressing a separate crowd of about 150 at Soul Sistas, a restaurant and catering business in Nashua on Sunday, Williamson was pleased by the turnout.

“I didn’t think there was any oxygen inside the Democratic Party for a primary challenge,” she said.

Surveying the room, she added, “At what point do we say that the DNC has gone down the wrong road?”

Although our source inside the Biden write-in effort said the enthusiasm within its ranks is “great,” it has thus far left little in terms of tracks.

With no budget, the only commercial on the air that mentions it is being run by a Biden-affiliated PAC, and candidate signs are almost nonexistent.

“It’s a sobering task in terms of the magnitude of the thing,” the organizer said. “And yet there are moments when you know you’re having an impact.

“I mean, when the New Hampshire Democratic Party held its delegate selection caucuses a few weeks ago we had packed rooms in Concord and Manchester and people were really excited about Joe Biden,” he said.

Yet the organizer conceded that rallying committed, activist Democrats is easy; getting “real” folks to turn out on Tuesday is another matter.

“Obviously you’re talking about a population out there who don’t follow this stuff day-to-day, and running a write-in effort that reaches them, without campaign resources behind you, and inspires them to act is really difficult,” he said.

“Then there’s the whole matter of getting them to show up, having them not see Biden on the ballot, and hopefully they’re remembering to write him in. There are a lot of steps,” he said.

The idea of a write-in for Biden extends all the way back to April 2023, when Robert F. Kennedy Jr. announced he was running.

“The polling showed — and continues to show — that Joe Biden has the overwhelming support of New Hampshire Democrats and independents. The problem was that people here expect you to show up, and what we didn’t want to have at the end of the day was an optics problem.”

Kennedy has since dropped his presidential bid as a Democrat and is now running as an Independent.

Since then, it has mainly relied on its volunteers to knock on doors and convince friends, family and acquaintances to turn out

and vote for Biden for president.

It has also organized a number of so-called visibility events featuring national Democrats, such as Rep. Ro Khanna, D-Calif., and Boston Mayor Michelle Wu, to spread the word the weekend before the primary.

The group also formed a super PAC, called Granite for America, that has sent seven mailers to likely Democratic voters encouraging them to vote for Biden and explaining how to do so.

Supporters of President Biden aren't the only ones holding a write-in effort.

Another group is called Vote Ceasefire, and its organizers are encouraging voters to write in "cease-fire" on their ballots when they vote for a presidential candidate on primary day.

The goal is to "draw attention to the urgent need to stop the violence in Palestine and the Middle East," according to a press release from the campaign.

The effort is designed as a way for voters to show their dissatisfaction with President Biden's handling of the Israel-Hamas war.

The actual process of voting for Biden in New Hampshire is fairly straight-forward.

The Democratic ballot will have 21 names on it, including the leading presidential candidates including Phillips, D-Minn., and self-help author Marianne Williamson. To vote Biden, all one needs to do is write his name in the black space on the bottom.

"One thing I keep reminding people of is that New Hampshire could have enormous general election consequences," the organizer said.

“I mean, if you look at the electoral map, you’ll see that New Hampshire is one of nine states that are truly swing states, and if you look back at 2000, you’ll see that had Vice President Al Gore won New Hampshire, regardless of what happened in Florida, he would have been president.

“Now, what typically happens with a New Hampshire primary is that you have a campaign establish itself here, they get their organization up and running early, and so on.

“So I think the thing that’s going to be really important is that the day after the election, there has to be a pivot to the general election. And it’s going to be really important that the Biden campaign itself replace our volunteers with real staff and resources. We can do this [primary] write-in campaign; what we can’t do is put the kind of operation in place that can decide the outcome of a national election,” he said.

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