



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on August 31, 2023

Biden Might Be Left Off of Primary Ballot in New Hampshire; Democrats Scramble

Joe Biden now faces the possibility of being left off of the primary ballot in New Hampshire, the byproduct of his own effort to strip the state of its position as one of the two first nominating contests in the country (after the Iowa caucuses).

Because of New Hampshire's place in the primary lineup, even sitting presidents have traditionally campaigned in the Granite State. Barack Obama, for example, rallied there in the lead-up to the 2012 primary, and had already set up seven offices in the state by the time voters hit the polls in January — despite the fact that he enjoyed an incumbent's advantage and did not face any serious challengers.



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Biden, however, finds himself in a unique situation. Last year, he was the driving force behind the push to replace New Hampshire as the first-in-the-nation primary with South Carolina — the state that was instrumental in making Biden the front-runner in the 2020 primary. Biden's effort won out, gaining approval from the Democratic National Committee and resulting in New Hampshire being pushed back to being the second primary, along with Nevada.

As [Politico](#) notes, this has created a dilemma: The law in New Hampshire requires that the state hold its nominating contest at least a week before that of any other state.

The law reads: “The presidential primary election shall be held on the second Tuesday in March or on a date selected by the secretary of state which is 7 days or more immediately preceding the date on which any other state shall hold a similar election, whichever is earlier.”

Republicans, who hold the state Legislature and the governor's mansion, have refused to change the law despite the change in the DNC's policy. However, the refusal is supported by state Democrats as well, and New Hampshire officials from both parties have vowed to go ahead with their primary before South Carolina's.

This move may result in the New Hampshire Democratic primary being an unsanctioned one that will trigger the penalty of half the state's convention delegates. Moreover, it could cause Joe Biden to be left off of the Democratic ballot.

Thus far, the DNC has held off on dealing with the challenging issue decisively, granting New Hampshire Democrats an extension, allowing them until September 1 to bring their primary into alignment with the new policy and hold their vote after the February 3 South Carolina primary.

“I don't care what people are talking about in Washington. We're going to have our primary. Democrats are going to come out and vote, and it's going to be the first primary,” Kathy Sullivan, a former New



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Hampshire Democratic Party chair and DNC member, told [Politico](#).

This could create a shocking situation in which, in the absence of Biden on the ballot, a challenger such as Robert F. Kennedy, Jr. or Marianne Williamson could win the first Democratic primary in the nation — even if that contest isn't sanctioned by the DNC.

Democratic officials are bracing themselves and trying to prevent what they consider an embarrassing potentiality. As *Politico* noted:

New Hampshire Democrats have talked of waging a write-in campaign for Biden to prevent such an embarrassment en route to his eventual renomination. But Sullivan said no official plans have been set in motion yet.

In the meantime, it's falling to Biden's allies and campaign surrogates to spread his message in New Hampshire in his prolonged absence. Even before he moved last winter to oust New Hampshire from the top primary spot, Biden hadn't set foot in the state since April 2022.

To try to whip up support for Biden amid the strange situation and the incumbent's virtual non-presence in the state, high-profile Democrats and their allies, such as Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont (an Independent who caucuses with Democrats), are crossing state lines to rally the base.

Although Sanders and Biden traded barbs in the 2020 primary, the progressive icon played up Biden's record while addressing voters at the New Hampshire Institute of Politics on Saturday.

"It is no secret that I want Joe Biden to be reelected president," Sanders said. "He and I share the goal of beating back right-wing extremism."

During his speech, Sanders touted Biden for making "significant investments" in infrastructure and said it was thanks to Biden that the country recovered from the Covid-19 outbreak.

Despite the tense air between New Hampshire Democrats on one hand and the White House and DNC on the other, all the parties involved are trying to downplay their differences in their interactions with the base.

Per *Politico*:

The Biden campaign referred comment to the DNC. Officials there said they continue to send the New Hampshire Democratic Party monthly funding, help with voter outreach efforts and finance a communications embed targeted at the Republican presidential hopefuls campaigning in the state for what remains the first primary on the GOP side.

DNC officials also said they're encouraging Democrats to continue visiting New Hampshire and are committed to supporting the state's Democratic candidates up and down the ballot, with two congressional seats to defend next year and the governor's office and state legislative majorities up for grabs.

But if state Democrats cannot come to an agreement with the national party, the end result could be a bad look for Biden as he begins the official primary season.



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