



Written by [Luis Miguel](#) on November 25, 2023

How Dean Phillips Could Foil Anti-Trump Republicans in New Hampshire

Two of the most outspoken anti-Trump candidates in the Republican presidential primary may be on the verge of having their hopes unexpectedly dashed.

Rep. Dean Phillips' (D-Minn.) long-shot primary challenge to Joe Biden may wind up playing a significant role, not in the Democratic primary, but in the GOP primary, as his presence on the ballot in New Hampshire's open primary system could pull independent voters away from Republicans Chris Christie and Nikki Haley.

New Hampshire is a key predictive battleground state that plays a major role in every presidential election cycle because it is the first primary in the nation — following right on the footsteps of the Iowa caucuses — and thus serves as a bellwether as to which candidates are truly viable. Aspirants to the presidency anticipate that by performing well in New Hampshire, they will charge their campaigns with momentum that will carry on to other states' contests.

In this cycle, Christie and Haley have been hoping to consolidate the non-Trump vote around themselves. As the campaign of Florida Gov. Ron DeSantis flounders, the two outspoken Trump critics — particularly Haley — are rising as the chief alternative to Donald Trump.

Because New Hampshire has an open primary, voters have the option of choosing which primary they want to vote in — be it the Democratic Party's, the GOP's, or that of another party. This is in contrast to states with closed primaries, where a voter must be a registered member of a given party in order to vote in that party's primary.

Thus, in an open primary, independents — those without any party affiliation — may vote in the primaries of either of the two major parties. And it is these independents whom Christie and Haley are trying to court in their effort to pull ahead of Trump, who has a significant hold on the Republican base.

But the presence on the ballot of Phillips, who is seen as having some appeal among independents and Biden-skeptic Democrats, means independents who might otherwise have voted in the Republican primary to go against Trump may instead cast their ballots in the Democratic primary to show Phillips their support.

While Phillips' support nationally is not considered large enough to make him a true threat to Biden, he has just enough to potentially affect races on a smaller scale, such as in the New Hampshire primary.



AP Images
Dean Phillips



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According to a [recent poll](#), he has 10 percent of the support among independents.

[Politico](#) spoke with residents of New Hampshire who expressed interest in Phillips' candidacy — to the detriment of Christie and Haley.

As the outlet reported:

And suddenly, Haley and Christie are encountering independent voters at their town halls who may not vote in the Republican primary after all.

"I would like to hear Dean Phillips," Larry Gray, a Newcastle independent, said about an hour after telling Christie at a recent business roundtable that he was backing the former New Jersey governor.

Diane Noble, a Nashua independent who's interested in Haley and Christie, said at a town hall for the former South Carolina governor that she'll "absolutely" be doing her due diligence on the Democratic side now that Phillips is in.

"If Dean Phillips runs the kind of race that he says he's going to run ... then all independents will be up for grabs," said Mike Dennehy, a veteran GOP operative in New Hampshire.

Another factor that could have an unknown impact on the New Hampshire primary is the fact that Biden will not be on the ballot. Last year, Biden 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.

However, New Hampshire Democrats, loath to give up the influence afforded them by being the first primary in the nation, decided to ignore the order from the Democratic National Committee (DNC) and are going to hold their primary at the usual time along with the Republican primary.

Because New Hampshire Democrats' primary is technically an "unsanctioned" one, the DNC is not allowing incumbent president Joe Biden's name to appear on the ballot there.

Independents account for just over 39 percent of New Hampshire voters; Republicans and Democrats make up 30 percent each. Those without party affiliation have a tendency to play a crucial role in the state's presidential primary races, such as boosting the candidacies of Ron Paul and Jon Huntsman in 2012.

However, the Christie and Haley camps have played down the significance of Phillips in New Hampshire. "Dean Phillips doesn't really concern me at all. I think we'll be fine," Christie recently told reporters. "The Republican primary is a much more attractive option for stopping Donald Trump, and I think that's what a lot of independents want to do."



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