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Sanders and Warren Close In on Biden's Lead in New Hampshire

The New Hampshire presidential primary has a long history of significance in determining the nominees of both major political parties, and this year will likely be no different.

While Iowa is the first state in the march to the nomination, with its caucus system, New Hampshire is the first state to hold a primary. Winning Iowa is certainly a plus, but it is certainly no guarantee that its winner will also win New Hampshire. In 2016, for example, Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) won Iowa, only to lose to eventual Republican nominee Donald Trump in New Hampshire a few days later.



Former Vice President Joe Biden, with his long career in politics, is no doubt aware of the importance of the outcome of the New Hampshire primary, and is presently enjoying a lead in the recently released *Suffolk University-Boston Globe* Poll. Biden has actually increased his percentage of likely votes from 20 to 21 percent since April, but two of his rivals, Senator Bernie Sanders (I-Vt.), and Senator Elizabeth Warren of Massachusetts have gained five points and six points, respectively, since April in the Suffolk poll.

Sanders now has 17 percent, followed by Warren at 14 percent. The poll surveyed 500 likely Democrat primary voters in New Hampshire between August 1 and August 4, and has a declared 4.4 percentage-point margin of error.

Other candidates trailed, with Senator Kamala Harris (D-Calif.) in fourth place with eight percent. She was followed by Mayor Pete Buttigieg of South Bend, Indiana, at six percent. Also making a significant gain was Representative Tulsi Gabbard (D-Hawaii), who garnered three percent in the poll, as compared to a mere one percent back in April. No doubt her recent debate performance, in which she aggressively challenged Harris' crime record, was an important factor. Some non-interventionists like what she has been saying about America avoiding any more war involvement also played a role, as well, as New Hampshire has a long record of supporting candidates perceived as anti-war.

Much of what is considered "success" in these early primaries is perception, in some cases even more so than the actual outcome of the primary.

In 1968, Senator Eugene McCarthy (D-Minn.), running on a strong anti-Vietnam War platform, actually lost to President Lyndon Johnson in the Democratic primary in New Hampshire, but the media quickly declared him the winner, rather than Johnson, despite Johnson having received 48 percent to McCarthy's 42 percent. Unwilling to fight on for the nomination, Johnson opted to drop out of the race. Then, in 1972, when Senator George McGovern (D-S.D.), another anti-war candidate, held Senator



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Edmund Muskie (D-Maine) under 50 percent of the vote, the press declared McGovern the victor. This perception was mainly because Maine is a neighboring New England state to New Hampshire, and being held to less than half the vote in a state where he should have won easier was seen as a defeat.

Finally, in 1992, Arkansas Governor Bill Clinton's presidential campaign had taken some very heavy hits, including the accusation by a nightclub singer — Gennifer Flowers — that she had had a 12-year affair with Clinton, despite Clinton being a married man. Flowers even had tapes of Clinton talking to her on the phone. He was also facing accusations that he had dodged the draft during the Vietnam War.

As Clinton crony James Carville later explained, most in the Clinton campaign thought they were finished. "Our polling had really tanked. We had fallen 20 points in New Hampshire in a matter of days."

But that perception — that the Clinton campaign was finished — actually wound up salvaging the Clinton campaign. Senator Paul Tsongas (D-Mass.) was from a neighboring state to New Hampshire, and was expected to easily win the Granite State — and he did, with 33 percent of the vote.

Clinton, however, claimed victory, despite finishing at 25 percent, eight points behind Tsongas. Clinton called himself "the comeback kid," and the media bought it, which meant the public largely bought it.

This is why a Biden victory in New Hampshire over two senators from neighboring states would seem to be quite an accomplishment. After all, if Sanders and Warren are unable to finish first and second in neighboring New Hampshire, how could they expect to beat Biden outside of New England?

Ah, but the *perception* is that Biden is the front-runner, and therefore, he should be able to win everywhere, including New Hampshire. Were Biden to win the state with the 21 percent he is presently getting in the Suffolk Poll, over Sanders and Warren, who picked up 17 and 14 percent, respectively, in the poll, just how would the media spin that?

Sadly, that would probably depend upon which candidate they thought was either the most liberal, or the best-suited to defeat President Donald Trump. When Trump defeated Cruz in 2016 in New Hampshire, the media chose to cast it as a great victory for Trump (despite its close proximity to Trump's state of New York), probably thinking that Trump would be easier to defeat in the general election, which is rather humorous in retrospect.

What makes it difficult to predict who is going to win the New Hampshire primary contest is that one not only has to forecast which candidate will get the most votes, but also guess which candidate the media will anoint as "the real winner" of the contest.

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Steve Byas is a college history instructor and author of History's Greatest Libels. He can be contacted at byassteve@yahoo.com



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