

# Dean Phillips launches long shot challenge to Biden for Democratic primary

By [Meryl Kornfield](#)  
The Washington Post

Rep. Dean Phillips (D-Minn.) on Thursday officially announced his long shot primary challenge against President Biden, pitching himself as a more electable alternative to the incumbent.

Phillips, 54, has centered his campaign on a pitch of being a fresher alternative to voters who have tired of Biden, 80, who he has said should “pass the torch” to a new generation. Biden is the oldest president in history, prompting a rebuke from Phillips that most other elected Democrats will only express in hushed tones.

But Phillips’s campaign faces several tall hurdles at its outset and is unlikely to pose any substantial challenge to Biden’s nomination prospects, according to Democratic strategists.

In his launch video, Phillips explained he was announcing his candidacy in New Hampshire. The longtime first-in-the-nation Democratic primary state holds diminished significance for the Democratic nominating process under a revamped nominating calendar, but it is one he said matters to him as someone who went to camp there and has held historic importance.

“That’s why I’m back as a candidate for president in the place where we begin, where presidential candidates stand before you, the voters, walk through the snow, listen to your dreams, hear your concerns, and most of all discuss how we are going to work together to move to the future,” Phillips said. “We’ve got some challenges, that’s for sure. We’re going to repair this economy, and we’re going to repair America.”

On Friday, Phillips is expected to give a speech in front of the New Hampshire State House, where candidates traditionally file for the presidential primary. The announcement comes a day after a Gallup poll found Biden’s approval rating had dropped to 37 percent, down 11 percentage points among voters in his own party, a low for Biden among Democrats.

In an interview with CBS News set to air Friday morning, Phillips said he had studied the polling and was concerned about how Democrats would perform in another matchup between Biden and former president Donald Trump, who is the clear polling leader for Republicans.

“I will not sit still and not be quiet in the face of numbers that are so clearly saying that we’re going to be facing an emergency next November,” Phillips said.

New Hampshire’s determination to stay ahead of South Carolina, which Democrats have determined should kick off the process next year, has put it at odds with the Democratic National Committee plan and at risk of losing its delegates. Biden’s name will not appear on the New Hampshire ballot, so voters will have to write his name to cast a ballot for him.

Under the DNC’s calendar, the first Democratic primary will be held in South Carolina on Feb. 3, followed by contests in New Hampshire and Nevada.

Phillips, who represents a congressional district encompassing many of the suburbs in the western half of the Twin Cities metro area, has already missed the Nevada filing deadline, so he won’t be able to pick up any of those crucial delegates. And South Carolina, a state Biden credits with setting him on the path to the nomination in 2020, will also be a challenge. Phillips also has little national name identification outside of Washington and his district. And he has a long history of supporting Biden.

“I’m so grateful America elected Joe Biden to be our president,” Phillips posted on Twitter, now called X, after Biden gave his first joint address to Congress.

Phillips has voted consistently with Biden, and it remains unclear what his message would be to voters about how he distinguishes himself from his party’s leader.

Phillips was previously the president and CEO of his family’s distilling business, which includes brands such as UV Vodka, and ran Talenti Gelato. In 2018, he won his first political office and flipped Minnesota’s 3rd Congressional District, which had been a GOP stronghold.

His financial fortune could be useful for him, as most Democratic donors are tied to Biden.

Phillips has \$20.5 million to \$70 million in assets, according to last year's disclosure report.

Phillips has already spent some money on the endeavor: He placed less than \$108,000 in television ads in northeastern markets this month as of Thursday night, according to the ad-tracking firm AdImpact.

In addition, at least two buses were spotted in New Hampshire before the announcement, marked with his congressional campaign's slogan: "Everyone's invited."