

# *First in the Nation*

The New Hampshire Primary:  
What it means to the state and the nation



Library and Archives of New Hampshire's Political Tradition



# New Hampshire Department of State

William M. Gardner  
Secretary of State



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Deputy Secretary of State

## “Let the People Decide” A Message from New Hampshire Secretary of State William M. Gardner

Being first hardly explains the New Hampshire primary’s consistent appeal to candidates and the media. More likely, it’s our unlimited enthusiasm for politics, the fact that we prefer handshakes and voting booths to polls, and take umbrage when the media crowns a “front runner” before we’ve had the opportunity to cast our vote. Because we hold to these traditions, candidate-friendly New Hampshire remains the quickest, easiest, least expensive and most effective place to start a presidential primary campaign.

The New Hampshire Presidential Primary has been first in the nation since 1920. Although it was not originally planned that way, it has over several decades become a matter of state pride and tradition. The New Hampshire primary was established by act of the General Court in 1913 when a farmer from the small town of Richmond asked why he and others like him did not have the right to vote directly for the delegates who would choose a party nominee for president. As a result, all citizens eligible to vote would have the opportunity to cast ballots in an open, fair, public process instead of a few party professionals in back rooms as had been the practice.

The primary was born not to be first and not for any economic benefit to the state, but simply to give more of its citizens a chance to be heard. It would later become first in the nation as other states either moved to later dates in the calendar or reverted back to a caucus format.

For several decades the primary had little national exposure. It was not until 1952 when, in addition to voting for delegates, one could also vote directly for a presidential candidate. This change coincided with the advent of television, which allowed more people to see the primary in their homes in a way heretofore unavailable. With air travel becoming more common, the candidates and reporters could get to the state easier, and with each passing primary there were more and more of both.

Today the primary has become an event of national significance, although its reason for being has not changed one bit. It still gives a voice to all of the Granite State’s eligible voters and offers a level playing field for all candidates who wish to seek the highest office with easy ballot access, so more have the chance to compete. This is what the New Hampshire primary was meant to be: Let the people decide.

We realize the special privilege in this state to cast the first ballots. It’s a tradition we honor and cherish as part of our political heritage. On the back cover you will find suggestions on how to remain involved and engaged in the primary process. Please share this report with others as we spread the word about its value and importance.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Wm. Gardner".

William M. Gardner  
Secretary of State



## The New Hampshire Primary: What it means to the state and the nation

More than 80 years of political tradition have uniquely prepared New Hampshire residents to cast the first votes in presidential politics.

For generations, we've made time to meet candidates at the school gym or town hall, tuned into debates and interviews on our local TV and radio stations, hosted candidate breakfast events at local restaurants, and invited national news and political programs to broadcast from our taverns.

Today, we welcome candidates and the media into our homes, schools, offices, hotels and restaurants because we understand that our participation in the political process ensures presidential hopefuls will meet and share ideas with ordinary citizens before the race propels them into an atmosphere of closed fundraisers, staged rallies and national advertising campaigns.

As a result of these traditions, the perception and the reality are that hosting the first-in-the-nation primary provides a tremendous opportunity for the state of New Hampshire, and provides unparalleled benefits to the nation's political process as well.

### New Hampshire's Legions of Engaged Voters

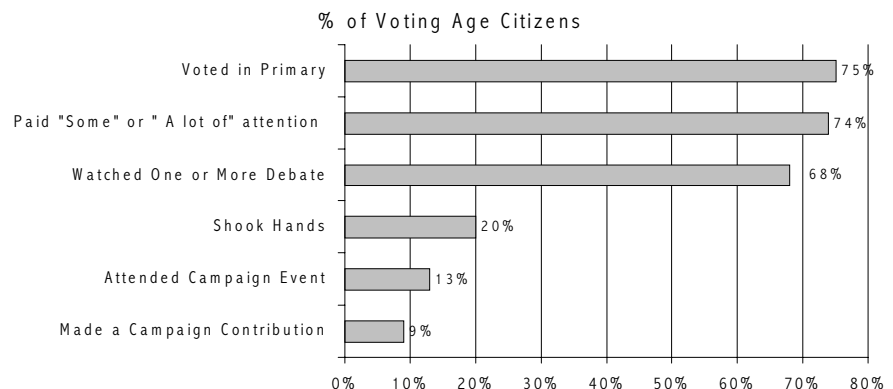
More than in any other state, New Hampshire residents seek opportunities to meet with candidates. We want to ask questions, size up the hopefuls, test their views firsthand. Nearly 20 percent of all New Hampshire residents have taken the time to shake hands with a candidate. In the 2000 campaign alone, 13 percent of residents attended a rally, speech or other event on behalf of a candidate.

We listen even when the newscasters and pundits have stopped listening. And we listen, even when we've made up our minds, to other contenders. In an era of people turning away from politics, we are engaged. Nearly 70 percent of residents reported watching one or more of the

*"Every four years, someone will ask why a nation this large, this diverse, lets a couple hundred thousand voters in an out-of-the-way corner of this country decide who should be president. The answer is obvious: Nobody does it better."*

—David Broder, *The Washington Post*,  
February 16, 1992

New Hampshire voters are highly engaged and media coverage reflected this





**Democratic presidential primary candidate Al Gore campaigns door to door in Portsmouth.**

presidential debates during the primary campaign.

When it came time to vote in February 2000, 85 percent of registered Republicans and 74 percent of registered Democrats went to the polls, about 50 percent higher turnout than the national average. The Joan Shorenstein Center on the Press, Politics and Public Policy identified New Hampshire residents as having the highest level of involvement in the 2000 presidential nominating campaigns, 10 percent higher than the next engaged state, Arizona. New Hampshire is often considered a “road test” for the candidates; they emerge from the Granite State more experienced and ready to hit the rest of the campaign trail.

*“The great virtue of these difficult people, who rather enjoy their reputation for being hard to please, is that they turn out. It is the most powerful reason that it is entitled to the privilege of being our first primary.”*

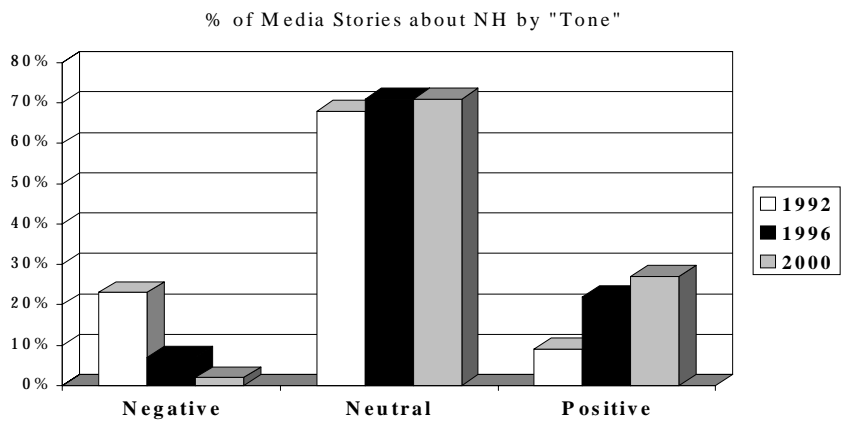
—Mary McGrory, *Washington Post*, January 27, 2000

#### Worldwide Media Broadcasts New Hampshire Story

The broadcast, Web and print media that converged on New Hampshire in 1999 and 2000 recognized the significance of what was happening here, and reported our story to the world.

The number of individual reporters writing about the primary increased by 40 percent over 1996, and their coverage exposed a potential audience of 220 million people to stories about New Hampshire and the primary. They wrote that our state represents the nation’s interests well. They described our desire to participate in “retail politics,” reported that we were “informed” and that our “serious voting electorate” had earned its “justifiable reputation.”

More positive and fewer negative media stories means that in 2000, 7 million more people received a positive impression of New Hampshire than did in 1996



*“In 2000 the word got out...New Hampshire has a strong economy for high-tech ventures and is an attractive place for start-up businesses.”*

*—The Wall Street Journal, August 23, 2000*

And they didn't just write about politics. They reminded audiences of New Hampshire's increasingly high-tech economy and its scenic beauty, and that our unemployment and poverty rates are among the lowest in the nation. Add these to our outstanding level of political participation, and New Hampshire, the media reported, remains a bellwether that is crucial to the entire electoral process.

#### Primary Publicity Benefits New Hampshire

Analysis of 2000 primary coverage shows that up to 22 million people received positive messages about New Hampshire, and the percentage of stories that actually recommended New Hampshire as a place to visit or do business reached up to 14 million people around the world, six times as many as in 1996.

To purchase that exposure would cost \$6.6 million, or almost twice what the state now spends on travel and tourism promotion each year.

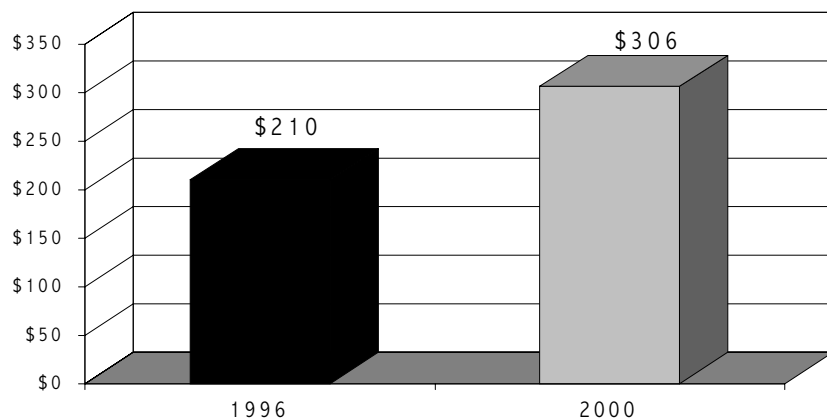
Among our visitors were business executives, who often make business location decisions while traveling for leisure. Economic development efforts to attract the estimated 130 new firms and 2,600 new jobs that will someday trace their roots to the 2000 primary would have cost the state \$26.4 million in business development benefits.

The overall value of primary-related media exposure, in terms of tourism promotion and business development, is \$33 million for the one year leading up to the primary. If New Hampshire were a corporation, our CEO would be delighted by the results of the efforts of key spokespeople to stay “on message” —the economic benefits of media exposure rose 80 percent over 1996.

#### Economic Impact of the Primary

Yet, the total economic impact of the primary is not as large as people may think. The one-year economic impact of the 2000 primary, including \$33 million in publicity benefits, was \$264

The economic impact of the 2000 primary was 50% greater than the impact of the 1996 primary



million. That's a fraction of the state's overall economy, about six-tenths of 1 percent of the state's \$42 billion gross state product.

But the numbers make a difference to individuals. Direct, indirect and induced spending contribute the remaining \$231 million to the total economic impact of the primary.

- Direct spending: Approximately \$83 million is spent directly by the campaigns and reporters.
- The lodging, restaurant, media, communications, and transportation industries, along with households, receive the greatest share of this direct spending.
- The direct spending provides the equivalent of 1,511 full-time jobs. In fact, campaigns alone paid New Hampshire residents nearly \$2 million in salaries and fees during the one-year cycle, the second largest category of campaign expenditures after media expenses.
- Indirect and induced spending: The primary also provided an additional \$31 million in indirect expenditures (purchases by businesses with the revenues they receive from direct primary expenditures) and another \$106 million of induced expenditures (purchases made by households who receive income generated from the direct and indirect sales by businesses).
- Indirect spending added approximately 270 jobs, and induced spending another 467 full-time equivalent jobs. Half of the jobs created are in lodging, restaurant, transportation and recreation industries, and another fifth are in service industries.

## Outlook for the Future

Once criticized for being out of step with the country, New Hampshire voters have shown that they take their first-in-the-nation responsibilities seriously.

Political participation is part of our cultural landscape: We are home to the town meeting; Our 400-member legislature is one of the largest in the world; and New Hampshire has more elections than any other place in the country. Because every two years we are in the midst of an election of some sort or other, we are always election ready. To govern ourselves, we must constantly meet candidates, size them up, even run for office ourselves.

We know that in New Hampshire anyone can run for president, and when it comes time to prepare to vote, we're ready to open a dialogue with any of the candidates on the ballot,



**Congressman Jack Kemp greets members of the Nashua West Rotary Club in 1988.**

*“...Once a struggling, insular and rural state, it now draws outsiders to a booming, high-tech, evolving economy. ...the state has real clout in determining who will become the next president.”*

*—Dallas Morning News, January 30, 1999*



*“This is New Hampshire, where presidential candidates, no matter how lofty their poll numbers or their official positions, must campaign ‘retail’ in a brand of person-to-person politics that requires would-be presidents to answer real questions...from voters.”*

—Mark Shields, *Seattle Post-Intelligencer*, November 8, 1999

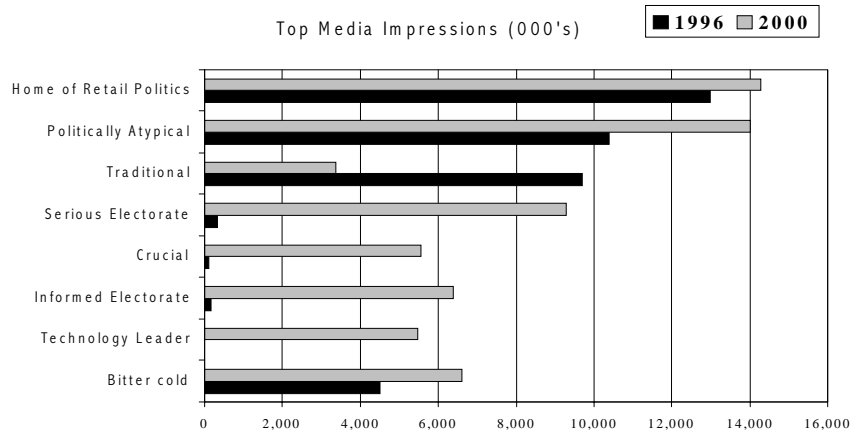
including dozens of lesser-knowns. We’re inviting candidates into our homes, hosting them at our manufacturing plants and investment offices, making time to meet them at chamber of commerce dinners and service club meetings and debating what we’ve heard over breakfast at the diner.

The primary produces an intense dialogue of ideas that plays out face to face across the state and in media broadcasts around the country. For this remarkable tradition to continue, we rely on the ability and efforts of New Hampshire spokespeople, both official and unofficial, to portray a complete understanding of the New Hampshire primary and encourage pride in our unique role. Our state, the primary, and the process of selecting a president will all benefit from this work.



**Republican presidential primary candidates prepare to debate at the University of New Hampshire’s Johnson Theatre in January 2000.**

New Hampshire was still portrayed as “different,” but in 2000, it was portrayed as more of a virtue



## *The New Hampshire primary...*

### *Engages our residents in the political process:*

Early in the political season, many New Hampshire companies, large and small, invite both presidential and gubernatorial candidates to make campaign stops at their offices.

“It’s a great opportunity for our employees. Many are from New Hampshire, but a lot have relocated from different parts of the country, and it’s exciting for them to see candidates face to face and ask their own questions. It’s not something they have seen anywhere else.” — *Tom O’Rourke, Director of Communications, Fidelity Investments*

### *Stimulates small business development:*

In 1992, Pat Buchanan was the first candidate to hire make-up artist Kriss Soterion to help him look well-rested even when he was not. As she helped him prepare for photo shoots with CNN, ABC and Time magazine, she began handing out business cards. She’s worked on each primary since, hiring freelancers to fulfill contracts with nearly every major candidate and news outlet.

“It’s very exciting, very exhilarating, and very lucrative from a business perspective. You do what you can to take all the calls, you’re under intense pressure, but it’s fun. We’re already lined up with ABC, CNN and the networks for next time. With the momentum of the last three primaries, we know we can count on it.” — *Kriss Soterion, Kriss Cosmetics*

### *Enhances our reputation worldwide:*

At The Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn, business increased 180 percent in January 2000 over February 1996. More reporters from more media outlets wrote more stories in 2000 than ever before. New Hampshire venues benefit directly from publicity that generates millions of potential impressions.



**Sean O’Kane, vice president of the New Hampshire Political Library, presents President Bill Clinton with presidential primary trading cards in Manchester.**

to see a Korean station broadcasting from the Center of New Hampshire. It was amazing.” — *Sean O’Kane, general manager, Center of New Hampshire Holiday Inn*

*“...There are 740,000 registered voters in New Hampshire. Their impact on a presidential campaign is way out of proportion to their numbers. But while it is a deadly serious business for the candidates, after all, campaigns are made and broken here, these voters are uniquely placed to draw the first conclusions and they take advantage of it.”*

—*Peter Jennings, ABC World News Tonight, January 5, 2000*



“...the New Hampshire primary today is the country’s most vivid example of democracy with the voters fully participating. At least in one small northeastern state, American voters are actually engaged and excited.”

—Bruce Davidson, *San Antonio Express-News*, January 30, 2000

*Links New Hampshire with national policy makers:*

New Hampshire’s high-tech companies keep a close watch on federal policies that affect their ability to do business: research and development funding, taxes, and manufacturing issues, to name a few. The primary provides an unparalleled opportunity to engage candidates, many of whom are already national decision-makers, on these critical issues.

“Sanders lives and dies by the federal government. Rarely a dollar flows through here that has not flowed past the president and Congress. So when someone like Sen. Orrin Hatch or John McCain comes here, these are people we value in themselves. More people understand what a countermeasure system is because of the primary. That, to us, is immensely valuable.”

—Richard Ashooh, *Director of Public Affairs for BAE Systems (former Sanders)*

*Creates community traditions:*

Madden’s Family Restaurant in Bedford hosts meet and greet opportunities for local and national candidates, across party lines. Hundreds of residents turn out.

“It’s amazing how far-reaching it is, and I’ve seen it happen at restaurants across the state. From senior citizens to high school students, I’ve never seen a candidate not take the time to answer every question. I’ve been able to arrange meetings with folks. There’s so much common ground. This encourages people to participate. And I pour the coffee and listen to conversation and get to hear my own poll of who will win the election, whether it’s a local school issue or the next president.” —Richard Madden Jr., *Madden’s Family Restaurant*



**Ronald Reagan makes an unscheduled stop near Millsfield during his 1976 campaign.**

*Builds our future:*

Oracle Corporation in Nashua employs a wide range of young people working in highly specialized software development. Engaging them in the political process helps set the stage for future involvement.

“Because of New Hampshire’s First-in-the-Nation Presidential Primary, Oracle’s employees at our New England Development Center have been able to meet and talk with the next president of the United States. Being part of New Hampshire’s hands-on campaign tradition gives us the opportunity to show the candidates our technologies, our workforce and our facilities up close.”

—Steve Hagan, *Vice President, Oracle New England Development Center*



*To learn more about how you can support our political tradition and its benefits to you, please visit our web site at [nhprimary.nhsl.lib.nh.us](http://nhprimary.nhsl.lib.nh.us).*



The study “New Hampshire’s 2000 First-in-the-Nation Primary” was commissioned by the Library and Archives of New Hampshire’s Political Tradition and authored by:

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### Keep the Tradition Alive:

#### Five things you can do to become engaged in the primary process

- Be an ambassador for the state: Welcome candidates and members of the media into your office or home.
- Attend political functions: rallies, speeches, debates, town meetings, etc.
- Engage in dialogue about the primary with your elected officials.
- Become involved with the election process: volunteer with a campaign or at the polls.
- Register to vote—and vote!



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