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The rise of Pete Buttigieg

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April Kim NHK Washington D.C. Bureau Producer

Outside a convention center in a small New Hampshire town, people are lining up in the freezing cold to meet the man who could become the next president. Pete Buttigieg was a relative political unknown before launching his presidential campaign last year, but he has shot up the polls and is now a serious contender to become the Democratic nominee.

Buttigieg emerges from inside the building to greet those waiting in line. He notes how similar the weather here is to that of his hometown, South Bend, Indiana, where he served as mayor.

The crowd tonight is a mix of die-hard supporters and undecided voters. It's the latter group that Buttigieg has been trying to woo ahead of the New Hampshire primary. The state is one of a handful where independent voters outnumber ones affiliated with either party.

Buttigieg has been targeting these undecided voters with an overwhelming amount of ad exposure. Since winning the lowa caucuses, his campaign has been flooded with \$406,000 in donations from supporters in New Hampshire, allowing him to spend freely on ads. He has reportedly splashed \$3.7 million on radio and television spots in the state.

Message of unity

Democrats but from the whole country.

neighboring Vermont. While Sanders remains the favorite for the eventual nomination, Buttigieg's enduring success continues to surprise many political analysts. Speaking to supporters at events throughout New Hampshire, I got the sense that a large part of his appeal comes from his message of inclusivity.

Buttigieg would go on to finish second in the primary to Bernie Sanders, the senator from

Republican voter, but Pete has a very positive message. I'm very excited to support him."

It often feels like Buttigieg is speaking directly to voters like Matthew in his speeches. He

constantly stresses that he is the only candidate who can draw support not only from

"Pete has a message of hope and inclusion," said Matthew Buonomano, 51. "I'm historically a

He spoke of his belief in the power of unity at an event in the town of Lebanon, in western New

Hampshire.

"At a divided time in our country, I don't think we could take the risk of excluding anybody

from this," he said. "I think we're going to defeat this president by inviting everybody to be at our side."



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It's not just Buttigieg's message that's attracting supporters. His age sets him apart in a field

Young and optimistic

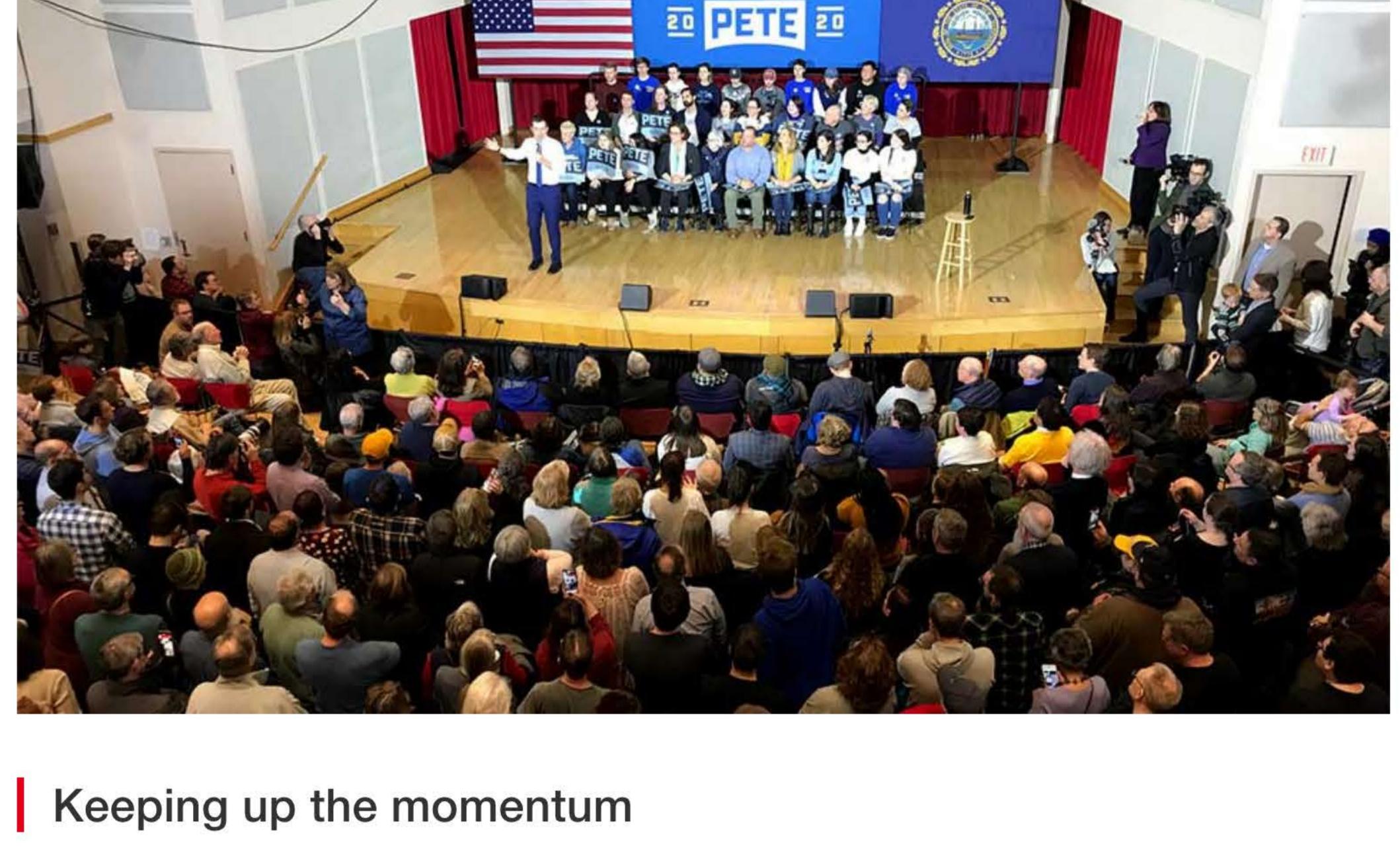
where three of his main rivals are in their 70s. At 38, Buttigieg is vying to be the youngest president ever, and his supporters say he is a welcome change in a political world dominated by old and familiar names.

"He's got a shiny new coat to him, like a new car smell," says John Hale, 20, a student at

"Pete is a fresh face," says Kathy Halverson, 71. "I just think he would have more energy."

They're very similar in terms of messaging. But Biden has this aura of being establishment, where Buttigieg doesn't really have that yet."

Keene State College. "[Former vice president Joe] Biden has been around for however long.



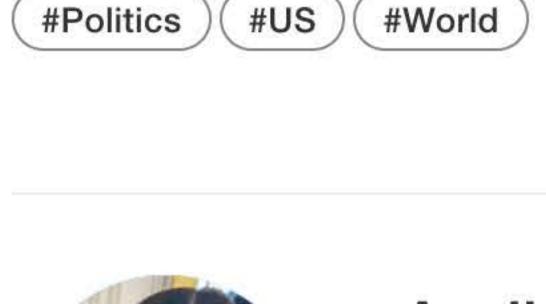
Buttigieg has exceeded expectations so far but it is unclear whether he can maintain this level

of success the rest of the way. The states coming up on the primary schedule present a set of challenges that will be uniquely difficult for a candidate like him:

African American support: Buttigieg has been repeatedly slammed for his poor record on

- discrimination and inequality during his time as South Bend mayor. This is one of the reasons he has such poor numbers among African American voters (a November poll showed him at 0 percent support among black voters in South Carolina (link)), an important bloc in a number of upcoming primaries. Lack of experience: Buttigieg has by far the least political experience of any of the remaining
- Democratic contenders. The issue of experience proved to be a major factor in the 2016 election, when Hillary Clinton defeated Bernie Sanders. Splitting the center: Buttigieg needs to consolidate his position as the leading moderate
- candidate by seeing off competition from Biden and Minnesota senator Amy Klobuchar. The surge in support for Klobuchar in the New Hampshire primary does not bode well for him in this regard. Answering critics from the left: Buttigieg was once touted as a promising figure of the left. In
- the past, he has expressed his admiration for Sanders and his support for a universal healthcare system. Critics say he has shifted to the center in an effort to broaden his political appeal. He has also come under fire for his time working at management consultant firm McKinsey and Co, and for money his campaign has received from Wall Street donors. He will need to once again prove his progressive credentials if he hopes to chip away at the support base of Sanders and Massachusetts senator Elizabeth Warren. Buttigieg's rise through the Democratic party has been swift, and regardless of whether he

wins the nomination, he will be a prominent figure in American politics for years to come. But if the mayor from Indiana hopes to end up in the White House, he still has a lot of work to do and a lot of people to convince. < 9 (3)



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