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In Conjunction With
The Twin-State Valley Media Network

**A Conversation with NH State Senator Peter Burling (D-Cornish)
~ Transcript of Podcast ~**

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The following is an interview of NH State Senator Peter Burling, conducted by Sarwar Kashmeri. Discussing the NH 2008 Primaries and its unique importance, as well as what voters in New Hampshire are looking for in 2008 and more...

Q. What in your opinion still keeps the New Hampshire primary so key? We have now within a few weeks of the New Hampshire primary a whole slew of huge states coming on, so why New Hampshire?

A. I think there are several answers to that question. First and foremost is the experience among the electorate. We have been doing this at least since 1952. The voters of New Hampshire participate actively, eagerly and intelligently. They like doing it. Which means we get 80 percent turnout rate in primaries. We engage very well with the candidates themselves. I will never forget a moment a few years ago when I was having lunch in the then-Pleasant Restaurant in Claremont and Alan Shepard walked in and said who do I have to kiss to get a vote? Excuse me, I t was John Glenn. I beg your pardon. "Who do I have to kiss to get a vote around here?" About a half dozen people jumped up and converged on him. New Hampshire is a place where every candidate starts out with an equal opportunity. Whether it is in William Jefferson Clinton, an unknown governor from Arkansas, or Sen. Clinton, a wildly well-known senator from New York. They come here and they have a chance to work for what they want - which is the vote of Democratic primary voters.

Q. Do you think that because it is a smaller state relative to California,

Pennsylvania and New York. and so on that people take a much more personal interest in what is happening and really try to sink below the surface with these candidate?

A. Oh, absolutely. First of all, we have developed our own culture about this issue. We require candidates to come, shake our hands and perform for us. Now the tradeoff is that if you are a candidate who doesn't have \$36 million in the bank, but you are candidate who does have a good idea, you can go into the living rooms of dozens of people in New Hampshire and sell your idea.

Q. What do you think the voters of New Hampshire are looking for this year especially.

A. I realize that I project my own desires onto the answer to that question. Let me start by saying what I want as a New Hampshire voter. I want a smart, capable person who has the ability to bring the country together. I want somebody who has enough confidence in the American people to tell them the truth about where we are and where we are going. I want somebody who is prepared to be optimistic about the great strength of American democracy.

Q. So if you were facing the field of candidates and you were given the opportunity to ask a question, what is the first question you would want to ask. A. How would you extract our armed forces from Iraq?

Q. That has got to be at the top everybody's mind, isn't it? Following up on that, what do you think makes a candidate believable in today's environment?

A. I'm sorry I don't have a definitive way to describe this, but it is credibility. It is the ability to communicate to the American voter a sense of trustworthiness. If you are the candidate and you can stand there and speak to a roomful of people and look at them in the eye and say to them: "We are in big trouble folks. We've got our forces stretched thin. We are pouring money into things we don't know how to do. And we have practically

busted our military in pursuit of a dishonest policy. Here's how we've got to get out." I mean, I think you earn those things as a candidate at the national level a) by the way you present yourself. And surely Barack Obama and John Edwards do that every well. But you also have to have experience and you look at somebody like Bill Richardson who has experience at every level of American government. You know, he generates trust as does Christopher Dodd. I really think there are some extraordinary candidates out there.

Q. Let me turn this around in closing, Let me ask you if you were in a roomful of media reporters, how would you advise them how to follow this really important primary. How do you want them ... where do you want them to prove. What do you want them to do?

A. Thank you for that question because I think that is one of the most important questions before us. The first thing I would say to reporters and media types is drop your convention. You come here to New Hampshire looking for a one-on-one race. There is a leader and a challenger. That does not reflect reality of the primary here in New Hampshire. We have seven or eight people, each of who is qualified to serve as president of the United States. Almost anything can happen in the course of the next nine months in New Hampshire, I guess it is 8 months now. Keep your mind open and report what is going on. Don't write the story that your editors sent you up here to write.

Q. Well, Senator Burling, I want to thank you for those words of wisdom. I will try to adhere to them.