



Candidates should heed this coalition

June 15, 2007 6:00 AM

One of the unique aspects of New Hampshire's first-in-the-nation primary status isn't just the retail-style campaigning that takes place from the Seacoast to the North Country. It's the draw the state has for issue groups across the political spectrum to come make their claims heard — on issues ranging from reducing the federal budget deficit, eliminating the IRS and fair taxation to marijuana legalization and re-examining Pentagon spending priorities, and so forth.

This collision of candidates and causes can be illuminating and confusing, but sometimes these efforts to raise the profile of pressing issues can lead to action. The bipartisan Concord Coalition, co-founded in 1992 by former N.H. Sen. Warren Rudman, raised concern about skyrocketing federal budget deficits. Former Massachusetts Sen. Paul Tsongas, another Concord Coalition co-founder, rode that issue to victory in the Democratic primary of 1992.

Beginning in 1993, the administration of President Bill Clinton, who finished second to Tsongas in the 1992 primary, tackled the issue through targeted budget cuts and tax increases, and by the 2000 budget, the federal budget was running a surplus.

In that spirit, we acknowledge the efforts of the New Hampshire-based Carbon Coalition, which is using the presidential primary season as a platform to push candidates of both parties to be serious about their climate-change proposals.

At the Statehouse in Concord on Wednesday, the Carbon Coalition issued a challenge to the candidates to put a comprehensive emissions-reduction policy in place within 150 days of election day.

"The issue of climate change is going to require immediate action under the next administration," said Ted Leach of the coalition. "It is time that we challenge candidates to propose a real action plan for addressing this issue."

It's an ambitious challenge, and we are skeptical just how responsive the candidates will be. But if the candidates of both parties decide to sidestep the details of their global warming reduction plans or not pay attention to the Carbon Coalition's challenge, they may find themselves behind the curve.

It's worth mentioning that the Carbon Coalition managed a statewide slate of organizations that put climate-change resolutions on the ballots at 182 town meetings. A total of 164 towns passed the resolutions that allowed residents to register their concerns about global warming and urged action at all governmental levels. We hope the presidential primary candidates are paying attention to that level of bipartisan voter interest — on an issue that requires local, regional and global action.

— Portsmouth Herald