

Dems already lining up for '28 presidential race in early voting states

‘Who’s got next?

BY STEVE PEOPLES, MEG KINNARD AND HOLLY RAMER
ASSOCIATED PRESS

SENECA, S.C. — The first presidential primary votes won’t be cast for another two and a half years. And yet, over the span of 10 days in July, three Democratic presidential prospects are scheduled to campaign in South Carolina.

Nearly a half dozen others have made recent pilgrimages to South Carolina, New Hampshire and Iowa — states that traditionally host the nation’s opening presidential nomination contests. Still other ambitious Democrats are having private conversations with officials on the ground there.

The voters in these states are used to seeing presidential contenders months or even years before most of the country, but the political jockeying in 2025 for the 2028 presidential contest appears to be playing out earlier, with more frequency and with less pretense than ever before.

California Gov. Gavin Newsom was referred to as a presidential candidate at one stop in his two-day South Carolina tour last week. Voters shouted “2028!” after he insisted he was there simply to strengthen the party ahead of the 2026 midterms. South Carolina has virtually no competitive midterm contests.

Term-limited Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear, who acknowledges he’s considering a 2028 bid, will spend two days touring South Carolina this week. He will focus on union members in addition to the state’s Black community in a speech that could draw an implicit contrast with Newsom on cultural issues, according to excerpts of his planned remarks obtained by The Associated Press.

California Congressman Ro Khanna, a progressive aligned with the Bernie Sanders’ wing of the Democratic Party, will target Black voters when he’s in the state a few days later with the son of a civil rights leader.

And former Chicago Mayor Rahm Emanuel is having private conversations with key South Carolina Democrats, including presidential primary kingmaker Rep. Jim Clyburn, in which Emanuel indicated strong interest in a presidential run. That’s according to



Timothy D. Easley | Associated Press

Kentucky Gov. Andy Beshear delivers his State of The Commonwealth address in the House chamber at the State Capitol in Frankfort on Jan. 8.

Clyburn himself, who said he’s also had direct contact with Beshear and Khanna after appearing alongside Newsom last week and Maryland Gov. Wes Moore in May.

“That’s what candidates have to do: position themselves and be ready when lightning strikes,” Clyburn said.

Democrats look to turn the page from 2024

The unusually early jockeying is playing out as the Democratic Party struggles to repair its brand, rebuild its message and fill a leadership vacuum after losing the White House and both chambers of Congress in 2024.

Democrats are decidedly more optimistic about 2028.

Republicans will not have the advantage of incumbency in the next presidential contest; the Constitution bars President Donald Trump from seeking a third term. And the race for the Democratic nomination appears to be wide open, even as 2024 nominee Kamala Harris and running mate, Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, have left open the possibility of running again.

With no clear front-runner, some Democratic operatives believe upwards of 30 high-profile Democrats could ultimately enter the 2028 primary — more than the party’s overpacked 2020 field.

And as Democrats struggle to stop Trump’s power grabs in Washington, some report a real sense of urgency to get the 2028 process started.

Texas Rep. Jasmine Crockett, a rising Democratic star, told the AP earlier this year that presidential prospects “need to be more visible earlier” as party officials look to take cues from a new generation of leaders.

“What freaks most Democrats out is not really understanding who’s up next. Like, who’s got next?” she said. “And I think that that is really what people want most; they want their presidential nominee now.”

A KENTUCKY DEMOCRAT STEPS INTO THE CONVERSATION

Beshear, Kentucky’s 47-year-old two-term governor, is scheduled to make his first visit to South Carolina on political grounds on Wednesday and Thursday.

He’ll start by addressing the AFL-CIO before promoting his appeal among red-state moderates and Black voters in a Thursday speech hosted by the Georgetown County Democrats in a region that voted three times for Trump and has a large Black population.

“Democrats have a huge opportunity to seize the middle and win back the voters who have been increasingly skeptical of the Democratic brand. But it’s going to take focus and discipline,” Beshear is expected to say, according to speech excerpts obtained by the AP.

There are no direct jabs at Newsom in the excerpts, but Beshear is expected to continue drawing contrasts with the California governor, who earlier this year suggested his party went too far in embracing “woke” priorities. In his prepared remarks, Beshear doesn’t shy away from such progressive cultural issues.

He will note he made Juneteenth an executive branch holiday for the first time in Kentucky, signed an executive order that prohibits discrimination against state workers for how they wear their hair and ordered the removal of a statue of Jefferson Davis, who served as the president of the Confederacy during the Civil War.

“The current federal administration wants to make diversity a dirty word,” Beshear plans to say. “They want people to believe that equity means everyone isn’t worthy of opportunities.”

Who else is stepping up?

Already this year, Walz of Minnesota and Moore of Maryland have addressed South Carolina



Meg Kinnard | Associated Press

Minnesota Gov. Tim Walz, left, speaks to reporters as Maryland Gov. Wes Moore looks on at Rep. Jim Clyburn’s World Famous Fish on May 30 in Columbia, S.C.

Democrats.

Biden Cabinet member Pete Buttigieg, a 2020 presidential candidate, hosted a town hall in Iowa in May. The month before, Illinois Gov. JB Pritzker headlined a Democratic fundraiser in New Hampshire.

Others are moving more cautiously.

Pennsylvania Gov. Josh Shapiro has avoided any early state travel this year, focusing instead on his 2026 reelection. Michigan Gov. Gretchen Whitmer has also focused largely on her day job. Both would be top-tier presidential candidates should they decide to run.

Khanna has been working to build his national profile since before the last election with frequent trips to New Hampshire, among other early voting states.

The California congressman is scheduled to host two town-hall style meetings in South Carolina this weekend with Illinois Rep. Jonathan Jackson, the son of civil rights leader the Rev. Jesse Jackson.

Khanna casts his lower profile — at least compared to potential competitors like Newsom and Shapiro — as an asset when asked about his party’s early 2028 field.

“I think it’s very different than in the past when you’ve had clear defined leaders of the party. I think that’s healthy. There is no status quo person,” Khanna said. “My guess is the last thing the party is going to want is more of the same.”

NEWSOM’S SOUTH CAROLINA DANCE

Newsom spent much of last year denying interest in a presidential run. But with his final term as governor set to expire at the end of next year, his 2028 ambitions are starting to emerge more publicly.

During his recent South Carolina tour, Newsom only smiled when voters shouted “2028!” after he referenced his focus on the 2026 midterms.

Clyburn said openly what the California governor would not. Appearing with Newsom, Clyburn encouraged local Democrats to be energized by the visits of “presidential candidates” coming early and often to their state.

Newsom looked around, seemingly seeking the object of Clyburn’s remark, as the crowd laughed.

In an interview afterward, Clyburn said he doesn’t have an early favorite in the 2028 Democratic nomination contest.

NEW HAMPSHIRE REMAINS A PLAYER

Pritzker headlined a key state fundraiser in New Hampshire in May. And state Democratic leaders are privately encouraging other 2028 prospects to visit the state.

Unlike South Carolina, New Hampshire features two competitive House races and a top-tier Senate election next year.

Minnesota Sen. Amy Klobuchar, a 2020 Democratic presidential candidate, campaigned Friday in the state with Rep. Chris Pappas, who is expected to represent Democrats on the Senate ballot next fall.

In a brief interview, she insisted her only purpose was backing Pappas’ campaign.

“I am here to help my friend,” she said. “I know a lot of people here and I want to put it to use in a good way.”

What do the voters say?

It may be early, but some Democratic voters and local officials say they’re ready to get the cycle started.

Jody Gaulin, the Democratic chair of a deep-red South Carolina county, is hoping the energy that comes along with potential candidates could boost her party’s ranks.

“This is exactly what we’ve been waiting for,” Gaulin said.

It’s much the same in New Hampshire.

Democrat Jane Les-cynski, who works at the manufacturing facility Klobuchar toured Friday, had a quick answer when asked her thoughts about the 2028 presidential election.

“I can’t wait,” she said.

Peoples reported from New York. Ramer reported from Gilsum, New Hampshire.



Mayfield Electric & Water System (MEWS) is accepting sealed bids for a reconductoring project within its electrical distribution system. The scope of work includes furnishing all labor and equipment required to complete the project.

A pre-bid meeting will be held at **9:00 a.m. CST on July 29, 2025**, to review project requirements and address any questions from potential bidders.

Sealed bids must be received at **408 East Broadway, Mayfield, KY 42066**, no later than **10:00 a.m. CST on August 5, 2025**, at which time they will be publicly opened and read aloud.

Drawings, specifications, and the project manual may be obtained by contacting: john.newland@eudsconsulting.com

OWNER’S RIGHTS RESERVED:
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