# Candidates scrambling on eve of first primary



ocratic presidential rivals roamed southern New Hampshire on Monday in a holiday hunt for votes, while President Bush phoned in a White House defense against his

conservative challenger.

The political traffic was heavy on the eve of Tuesday's New Hampshire presidential primary election, the first balloting of 1992. By bus, van and rented car, the candidates, their aides, and throngs of reporters cruised town to town in the mild February sun.

Their volunteers, many of them college students in a Presidents' Day holiday mood, waved signs on downtown street corners, handed out leaflets, worked the telephones, rang doorbells.

At one point, while Bush was being interviewed by telephone on radio station WFEA in Manchester, Patrick Buchanan, his GOP challenger, was waiting on hold.

The polls begin opening at 6 a.m. Tuesday, although the north country hamlet of Dixville Notch was registering its handful just after midnight.

The polisters' rated Paul Tsongas, the former senator from Massachusetts, the late leader in the five-man Democratic field, with Arkansas Gov. Bill Clinton running second.

Bush was asked on live evening interview with Bos-

ton station WHDH-TV if he had ever considered the emphasis on national health insurance. "National possibility of a one-term presidency

"It never has entered my mind," Bush said. "I'm not taking anything for granted ... and I believe I'll be elected again.

Bush held a hefty lead in GOP polling. Both sides said he'd win, but Buchanan sought to come close between them may have trouble raising the funds and enough to send the White House and the party a message of conservative rebellion - and to keep his challenge going in the South.

front-runners' lot can be worrisome.

close third. Now I'm in a situation where I'm having to explain whether I have to win."

Clinton staged a dozen stops in his final sprint of a race in which he'd been rated the leader before the controversies over a woman's claims of an illicit affair with him - tabloid trash, he called it - and over his Vietnam-era draft status.

In a radio interview Monday, Clinton disputed a question suggesting his candidacy was in decline. When a person stands up to lies and false charges, it makes people respect them more," he said.

Sen. Bob Kerrey of Nebraska said he expects to do realize that he's not a single-issue candidate despite his tions."

health insurance for me is a beginning, a beginning of fundamental change in the United States," Kerrey told a health care forum in Concord.

Kerrey and Sen. Tom Harkin of Iowa were ranked well behind Tsongas and Clinton in the polls. The loser gaining the backing to go on into the most costly campaign states to come.

We are ready to go national better than any other "I'd love to win," Democrat Tsongas said. But the candidate," Harkin told campaign workers at his Concord headquarters. At the Allenstown town hall, Harkin 'Look at the expectations," Tsongas said in Exeter, said he's the Democrat who would break with current "The fact is that two weeks ago, it was first, second or a economic policy, not just fine tune it. "We won't wait for any tax breaks for the rich to trickle down," he said.

Harkin has been slapping at the other Democrats in campaign speeches and commercials, and Kerrey said that may hurt the lowan. "I hope so," Kerrey said at a Concord news conference. "He's become Hulk Hogan in this campaign and I hope it's backfired."

Former California Gov. Jerry Brown said the other candidates are all insiders, part of a stagnant system he wants to jolt into change. He scoffed at Sunday night's polite debate among the five Democrats. "It's like this self-contained bubble, some kind of Gong Show," he well because New Hampshire voters are beginning to said. "You sit there and they pop these little ques-

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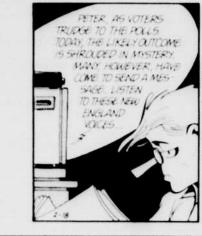
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