

POLITICS SEPTEMBER 22, 2026

Pete Buttigieg doesn't rule out 2028 presidential run

Pete Buttigieg declined to rule out a 2028 presidential bid at a New Hampshire event, saying his focus now is helping Democrats in elections six weeks away.



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Former U.S. Secretary of Transportation Pete Buttigieg was the keynote speaker on Monday night at the Nackey S. Loeb School of Communications First Amendment Awards. The ceremony took place at the New Hampshire Institute for Politics at Saint Anselm College in Goffstown. DAVE PIERCE/UNION LEADER

Pete Buttigieg enters
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Pete Buttigieg, former U.S. secretary of transportation and 2020 candidate for president, wouldn't say Monday if he's going to make another run for the nation's highest office in 2028. But he didn't rule it out either.

Buttigieg gave the keynote address at the Nackey S. Loeb School of Communications First Amendment Award ceremony at Saint Anselm College's New Hampshire Institute of Politics.

"I'm totally focused on the elections that are going on right now. Even though I'm not on the ballot, I'm spending the majority of my time helping the people who are. I think the elections that are six weeks and one day from this evening are going to be unbelievably important," Buttigieg said when the Union Leader asked if he's going to run for president.

He said he's focused on helping Democrats succeed in the immediate future but was coy about a run in 2028.

"In the past, I've often faced decisions about running for office and I've always believed that the best way to think about those decisions is to look at what's required. Look at what you bring to the table and to see what you can do to make yourself useful," Buttigieg said. "Right now, I know that making myself useful means helping those who actually are on the ballot in a moment when I'm not."

Buttigieg addressed the crowd just weeks after Democrats enjoyed a strong turnout in the state's primary elections. More than 155,000 ballots were cast in the Democratic primary, voter registrations were up and undeclared voters chose Democratic ballots more often than Republican ones.

Buckley bullish

New Hampshire Democratic Party Chair Raymond Buckley told the Union Leader that those results support his optimism moving into the general election in November.

"What we've seen across the country since the 2024 election is we have picked up 31 electoral seats and the Republicans haven't picked up one," Buckley said.

Buckley said he's known Buttigieg for years and said that there's "nobody smarter" and characterized him as "amazingly talented" when asked if he thought the former mayor of South Bend, Indiana, would be a strong candidate for president.

During his speech, Buttigieg described the social and technological changes influencing the way Americans experience and interpret the world around them. He said the problems we face today are a reflection of the zeitgeist but are not completely novel.

"One lesson that history can teach us is that you cannot legislate or censor your way out of these problems. Protecting access to the truth is not about a government commanding everyone to be truthful according to the likes of the government," he said. "It is the duty, though, of the citizen to be a thoughtful consumer of information."

Buttigieg also characterized the U.S. political system as "completely broken" and encouraged the audience to embrace "the possibility of major reform." Paramount, he said, is ending partisan gerrymandering.

"We could achieve that with a single federal law," he said.

"We could reform so many things that have evolved in ways that make our democracy worse than what it could be and yet we're strangely out of practice when it comes to big reforms," he said. "I fear that we've lost our ambition in believing that certain big reforms are even possible."

Buttigieg cautioned the audience, packed with prominent New Hampshire Democrats such as 1st Congressional District candidate Stefany Shaheen, against complacency.

"We must engage in bigger thinking," Buttigieg said.

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