

Sanders Kicks Off Re-Election Bid

By WILSON RING

Associated Press Writer

BURLINGTON — The most serious problem facing government today is that a majority of Americans no longer believe in the democratic government that represents them, U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders said yesterday.

So Sanders challenged the supporters who were on hand for his re-election announcement to knock on tens of thousands of doors to get people involved in government.

"In truth, what we are fighting for is nothing less than the vitality of the American democracy, and the right of the people to have government which represents their interests — and not just the interests of the millionaires and billionaires," Sanders told the crowd of about 100 supporters at the Burlington Boat House.

Sanders used his kickoff announcement to reiterate the themes that he has been sounding for years: He wants to protect the rights of the poor, the elderly, working people, veterans and anyone who has been forgotten by what he sees as greedy corporate America.

First elected to Congress in 1990, Sanders said he is now the longest serving independent ever to serve in Congress.

"I am proud to report that I have helped lead the opposition to (House

“I am proud to report that I have helped lead the opposition to (House Speaker) Newt Gingrich and the National Republican leadership who are pushing one of the most extreme right wing agendas ever seen in the modern history of this country.”

U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders

Announcing his bid for re-election yesterday

Speaker) Newt Gingrich and the National Republican leadership who are pushing one of the most extreme right wing agendas ever seen in the modern history of this country," Sanders said. "But I am also here to tell you that as an independent, I have stood up to President Clinton and the Democratic leadership when they've been wrong."

Two Republicans are in a primary battle to challenge Sanders in the November election.

Mark Candon of Rutland is a former state representative and Jack Long ran against Sanders in 1996 as a Democrat.

Also seeking the GOP nomination is Peter Diamondstone, who plans to run as a Liberty Union candidate in the fall. There are no congressional candidates on the Democratic ballot.

Sanders also used the speech to recite what he said were his accomplishments, including the National Cancer Registry Act, which tracks cancer cases across the country; senior nutrition programs, and veterans' issues, including a new treatment for Persian Gulf Syndrome, the mysterious illness suffered by many veterans of the 1991 Persian Gulf War.

He vowed to continue his fight to protect the environment, the federal home heating assistance program for low income Americans known as Liheap and Social Security, Medicare and Medicaid from assaults by congressional Republicans.

And he also vowed to fight a move by some congressional Republicans to charge senior citizens co-payments for home health care visits as part of the Medicare system.



Rep. Bernie Sanders and his wife, Jane, enter the Burlington Boat House yesterday.