



AP
SENIOR CITIZENS at an elderly housing complex listen to incumbent U.S. Rep. Bernie Sanders, I-Vt., foreground, as he campaigns on Thursday in Burlington.

Sanders rallies with supporters

By WILSON RING
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BURLINGTON — Rep. Bernard Sanders campaigned on familiar territory in Burlington Thursday, telling senior citizens, students and others of his vision of a government that protects its disadvantaged.

Vermont's independent congressman then carried the same message to a less-enthusiastic Colchester Rotary Club, but his answers to questions seemed to disarm much of the Rotarians' implied criticism.

All morning he hammered on the themes that have become the trademark of his political career: a single payer health care system, get the rich to pay their fair share of taxes, maintain and expand services for the poor, the elderly and disadvantaged, help American workers, and pump more money into

education.

He repeatedly denies charges that he is a big spender, saying the costs of the new programs could be paid for by cuts in the defense and intelligence budgets and eliminating wasteful or uneconomical programs.

"I do vote for something," Sanders told the Rotary Club. "I think we should reinvest in America."

With less than a week until the election, Sanders' voice is hoarse and he is frazzled by the almost non-stop campaigning. He got temporarily lost in Burlington, the city he led for eight years as mayor, trying to find a recording studio.

Sanders' race against Republican state Sen. John Carroll lacks the open rancor that Vermont's U.S.

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Senate race does. But Sanders and Carroll have been sniping at each other about the accuracy of the others' ads.

"I think we are going to win this election," Sanders said. "We have the support of the average Vermonter."

But he is clearly concerned about what the effect is of what he feels are attack ads being run against him by the National Rifle Association.

And he is worried that the Oct. 7 adjournment of Congress kept him from starting his campaign full-time until late and that he has not answered some of Carroll's criticisms vigorously enough.

"We have not been out front in responding to a number of Mr. Carroll's ads," Sanders said.

Sanders is in his element on the stump. He revels when talking to supporters and sticks to his positions when debating those who oppose him.

He began Thursday at Burlington radio station WKDR, where he did a call-in show. He fought off hostile callers, defending his vote against the Persian Gulf war, saying he disagreed with former President Bush, but supported the troops.

After leaving WKDR, Sanders roamed the streets of downtown Burlington looking for a recording studio where he recorded a tag

line for an ad being made on his behalf by a veterans' group.

He then headed for a senior citizens' high-rise in downtown Burlington where he told a dozen elderly women how he would protect their Social Security benefits and fight for health care benefits.

At the University of Vermont, he made an extemporaneous speech from the steps of the Billings Student Center, where he called on the students to stay involved.

From there it was on to a Burlington school where he spoke to a half a dozen teachers and their charges.

He ended his morning campaign at the Light House Restaurant in Colchester. The group of business people were not as enthusiastic about his populist crusade, but Sanders didn't deviate from his message.

"The largest multinational corporations are turning their backs on the working class," Sanders said of companies that send jobs overseas. "I will fight to raise taxes on the very wealthy."

In the question and answer session, it was obvious the Rotarians weren't as supportive as the senior citizens.

He fended off questions about his effectiveness and his opposition to unrestricted world trade.

"I do not foment class struggle," Sanders said. "I tell the truth."