



ADAM RIESNER, Free Press

Independent congressional candidate Bernard Sanders tries to gather support on the streets of Winooski on Thursday. 'I'm Bernie Sanders and I'm running for Congress,' he shouts as motorists honk horns as they pass.

Sanders

Opponent gains Winooski cheers

By Lisa Scagliotti
Free Press Staff Writer

Independent Bernard Sanders spent a good portion of the last Thursday before the election being cheered on by people in Winooski.

The U.S. House candidate ventured across the river to the Democratic stronghold shortly after 11 a.m. He was followed by reporters and photographers interested in watching the candidate who has been giving U.S. Rep. Peter Smith, R-Vt., the tightest campaign he has seen.

First stop: the Winooski Senior Center where Raymond Clavelle, father of Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle, was waiting beside his pickup, which was covered with "Bernie for Congress" signs. Clavelle introduced Sanders to those filing in. "This is a good day," Clavelle said. "Thursday is bingo day."

Sanders joined in the lunch of roast chicken, mashed potatoes, peas and carrots, cider and cake and when it was over, he stood up to address the roughly 30 people there.

Sanders spoke of fairer taxes, a decent standard of living and health care. He said that he wants drug companies' prices investigated and that he would oppose any future cuts to Medicare. The budget package recently passed by Congress will reduce planned Medicare increases by \$44 billion over five years.

"We have to stand up and fight for national health care. Does everybody understand that?" Sanders asked.

Turn to SANDERS, back page

Sanders garners Winooski cheers

From page 1A

"Yes," came the chorus of voices.

Sanders then brought up the topic that has been dogging his opponent all week — Smith's two newest TV ads. The ads accuse Sanders of evading taxes, not voting, and sympathizing with Fidel Castro's government in Cuba. One ad states that President John F. Kennedy's inaugural speech made Sanders physically sick.

"They are absolute lies," Sanders said. "It is upsetting to me."

One woman sitting in front of Sanders said she had seen the ads. "Somebody ought to punch his lights out," Marie Benoit, 66, of Burlington, said of Smith.

She said later that she cannot watch when the ads come on TV. "How could (Sanders) be mayor for as long as he was and not pay his taxes?" she said. "I hope people have enough sense not to swallow that garbage."

Elaine Harwood, 92, sitting next to Benoit, said she had already voted for Sanders. "I mailed my absentee ballot," she said.

Loretta Martin, who served lunch at the senior center, said Smith's ads are the topic of conversation at the senior apartments where she lives.

"You'd be surprised how many people were undecided until they saw that ad," she said. "I always admired Mr. Smith, but I wouldn't vote for him now for nothing. It's sad ... to use President Kennedy like that. I don't know why he did that."

Inside Tim's IGA, Clavelle watched Sanders hand out buttons. "I feel confident he's going to win," Clavelle said. "I'm so hepped up about it, I can't sleep."

Standing at the intersection of Main and East Allen streets, Sanders waved to traffic. Waves, smiles, cheers and plenty of honking horns were directed his way. "Hi!" Sanders called out. "Thank you!"

A radio reporter approached Sanders, asking his reaction to Thursday's endorsement of Smith by Bill Aswad, the Democratic president of Burlington's City Council.

Sanders smiled and said, "Bill Aswad? Boy, I'm in trouble now!"