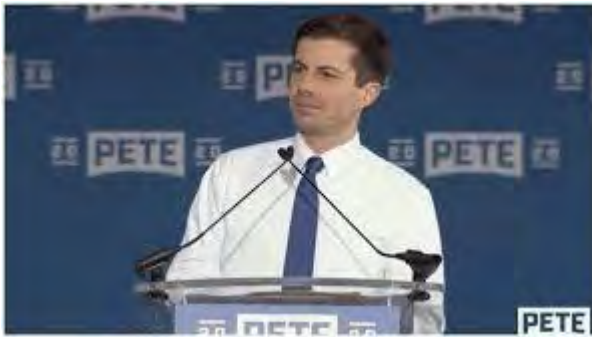


The Herald-Times

Mayor Pete—Real Deal or Flash in the Pan?

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America may be witnessing a unique moment in its political history. On Sunday I was delighted to see my city's (Austin, Texas) Mayor—Steve Adler—introduce Pete Buttigieg on the occasion of his official announcement as a presidential candidate. With each day, every new speech, and additional interview, Americans are becoming increasingly impressed by Pete Buttigieg. Why?

As a scholar of communication for over 40 years, I find him rhetorically distinctive. Buttigieg's sharp intellect, compassion, clear vision and hope for America, impeccable understanding of history, ability to talk directly to voters, and thorough grounding in the issues facing our nation are nothing less than striking.

I realize he lacks national experience, but perhaps Buttigieg is that once in a lifetime presidential candidate who comes on the scene at precisely the right time with a potentially persuasive and bipartisan message—a message calling for genuine change (where “change” is more than a cliché and tired rhetorical trope) to extricate the country from a dangerous time in history. Might Buttigieg be the one? I wonder.

To be clear, there are many outstanding 2020 Democrat candidates, each with strengths and weaknesses. I have no preference at this point. My goal as a voter is to study each without being negative, since it is imperative that we avoid “eating our own.” My goal as a rhetorician is to analyze their messages carefully to discern potential impact.

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