



NSDA Nationals 2016

PF Topic Analysis

This June, Public Forum debaters qualifying for the 2016 NSDA National Debate Tournament will be discussing the topic **“Resolved: On balance, a one-day national primary would be more beneficial for the United States than our current presidential primary process.”** This guide will provide help deciphering the precise meaning of this resolution, as well as important background information, discussion of some of the key points of contention, and plenty of evidence for both sides, to help you build strong cases worthy of national competition.

We’ll get started by taking a look at what exactly the topic is asking you to discuss.

Resolutional Analysis

On balance

This term should be highly familiar to PFers seasoned enough to qualify for Nationals, so I will not spend time on it in this guide.

If you do find yourself in need of additional guidance regarding the usage of “on balance,” you can consult past guides that cover it [here](#).

One-day national primary

A “one-day national primary” is basically exactly what it sounds like. In contrast to our present system (which will be discussed more below), a “one-day national primary” would take place everywhere nationwide on the same day.



More beneficial for the United States

This phrase is also quite self-descriptive. “More beneficial” aligns with “on balance” to mean something like “brings advantages sufficiently large to outweigh the benefits of the status quo, as well as any possible harms created by the new system.”

“For the United States” tells us that the cost-benefit calculus conducted in the debate should concern itself with issues that affect the USA and its citizenry, rather than some other nation (such as “France” or “China”), broader population (such as “humanity worldwide”), or smaller subset (such as “Texas,” “Conservative Republicans,” or “the Midwest”).

Also, of course, “for the United States” instructs us to consider America’s electoral processes, not those of any other democratic system.

Than our current presidential primary process

In order to understand the arguments for and against a one-day national primary, you first have to become familiar with the status quo. So, what is “our current presidential primary process”? Those of you too young to have yet voted in a presidential election may find yourselves surprised by its complexity.

Let’s start with the basics first. A “[primary](#)” is a contest held for the purpose of selecting a candidate to represent a particular political party. The primary is held before the “[general election](#),” which is when the new president (or senator, or mayor, or whatever) is actually chosen.

It will be worthwhile to clarify the following upfront: the word “primary” refers to the overall process by which a political party chooses who will become its candidate in the upcoming general election. However, the “primary process” can include both true “primary elections” and other systems used for selecting a candidate, such as “caucuses.” We’ll go over the distinctions in more detail in just a bit.



Many people don't fully understand exactly what political parties are. Contrary to popular belief, the U.S. Constitution [says nothing about parties](#), and they are not actually formal elements of the government. The fact that American politics are dominated by just 2 major political parties (Republicans and Democrats) is an accident of history, not a deliberate component of our democratic structure. In fact, the parties' activities can be more accurately understand as functions of private clubs than as anything to do with the American government itself.

Think about it like this: imagine the administration of your school informed you that they would be implementing a new policy next year, in which one student would have total control over which sports, clubs, and extra-curricular activities received funding and which did not. This student "Emperor" would be chosen by giving every 9th-12th grader a slip of paper, and instructing them to write down the name of the person they'd most like to see given the power. The principal would then count the paper slips and crown whichever student received the largest number of total endorsements.

You don't want to see the debate team lose funding, so what should you do? Your first thought is probably to write down the name of someone on the debate team you know is well-liked. Hopefully that person receives numerous votes, and debate retains its funding. Soon, though, you overhear that the whole marching band got together and agreed on one person that they'd all support. There are 200 students in the marching band, and only 50 on the debate team, so you can't beat them even if all debaters coordinate. From here, you might do any number of things. You might send a debate representative down to the band kids to attempt to make a deal: "we'll support your candidate if you promise to maintain debate funding in addition to band funding." Alternatively, you might try to beat the band candidate by forging a coalition with members of other activities similar to debate. For example, maybe members of debate, speech, mock trial, and various politically-oriented clubs decide to work together due to their compatible areas of interest. Or perhaps you try to get students who participate in every club and activity that isn't a sport to work together to win the election and seize all athletics-related funding. Etc., etc.

This is pretty much what political parties are. In the school emperor scenario, the principal didn't instruct you to seek out alliances with mutual interests and leverage those to influence the outcome of the election. As far as the administration cares, every student could write down a random name and never think about it again. But, your rational pursuit of your own interests led you to pursue coordination with others in order to maximize your chances of victory. Similarly, American elections *could* be conducted without parties, as far as the Constitution or any other legal constraints are concerned. However, parties developed because people realized they would be more likely to end up with the sorts of leadership they favored if they worked together with people who held similar ideas to rally support for a single candidate.



Just like in the school emperor example, also, members of real life political parties are not always in total unity and agreement with other co-members. Just because you join the “debate/band coalition” doesn’t necessarily mean you care about the marching band’s survival; it just means that the coalition fit your individual desires better than any of your other options. It could very well be that your arch nemesis plays the trombone and you’d just *love* to see the marching band go down in flames. Nevertheless, you work together because doing so is advantageous for you in this particular context. Similarly, America’s two major political parties are made up of a variety of distinct factions who ally together despite not always agreeing. This explains why, for example, people who consider themselves libertarians might support a Republican candidate; a libertarian doesn’t necessarily agree with a conservative social agenda, but they may vote for a candidate who is across-the-board conservative due to their mutual commitment to free market economic policies.

It is precisely this dynamic of cooperation within a network of overlapping and competing interest groups that is responsible for the existence of primary elections. Individual members of a particular party will all have some beliefs in common, while probably disagreeing on other issues. The purpose of the primary is to allow party members to decide amongst themselves who will represent their coalition in an upcoming general election.

It’s worth noting that American citizens are not required to join a political party. In some states, you have the option to register with a party when completing your official voter registration through the government. In other states, voter registration is entirely separate from party enrollment. Voters who don’t align themselves with any party are variously referred to as “[independent voters](#)”¹, “**unaffiliated voters**,” or sometimes “[swing voters](#).”

Now, because political parties are really just private clubs, they get to make their own rules and schedule their own events (to some extent, anyway—more on this later). In the status quo, America’s political parties schedule their primary elections at the state level, with some consultation between state party leaders and their national counterparts, as well as the state government’s election officials. A variety of factors are considered when making scheduling decisions.

¹ Confusingly, there is a minor party in the U.S., with a far-right and sometimes [segregationist](#) ideology, that goes by the name of the “[Independent Party](#).” People who are registered members of the Independent Party are different from literal independent voters. Throughout this guide, when I use the term “independent,” I mean voters not formally affiliated with any particular party, *not* the capital-I “Independents.”



The primary process in each state may proceed following one of two main types of schemes. A true “**primary election**” looks very much like a general election, with voters casting secret ballots and officials counting those ballots after polls close in order to determine a winner. A “**caucus**” is a somewhat quirkier primary process, in which voters gather in some location and actively attempt to persuade each other to support one candidate over another. At the end of the process, the candidate with the most support is declared the winner. Some states may hold both a primary election and a caucus. We will go over this in more detail in the “Background” section.

Currently, the various primary contests for all 50 states (and the U.S. territories) are spread out over various days covering a ~4-5 month timespan. The first contest is always Iowa, which uses the caucus system. Second up is New Hampshire, which has a traditional primary election. Next come Nevada and South Carolina. These 4 contests all take place in February; the rest follow between March and early June. While IA, NH, NV, and SC always go first, in that order, the remainder of the calendar has a tendency to vary from election to election. When every primary is complete, the party holds a National Convention, where the chosen candidate is officially crowned the party’s nominee.

We’ll go much deeper into how the process goes down in the next section.

So, in summary, this resolution asks the pro side to defend that it would be advantageous to have all Americans vote for who should represent their party in the general election on the same day, rather than scheduling these races over a multi-month hodgepodge of dates.



Background

As you have already seen from the Resolutational Analysis, America's status quo presidential primary system is extremely complex and convoluted. High-quality debating about possible reforms, however, will necessitate a fairly sophisticated understanding of the current system's many intricacies. We'll take a deeper dive into that information now.

At their most basic level, presidential primaries exist to select the candidates that will represent each political party in the "main" [general election](#). So, the Republican primary exists to determine the Republican candidate for president², and the Democratic primary chooses the Democratic candidate. The winner of each primary becomes his or her party's nominee for the presidency, but are obviously not guaranteed any office just by virtue of winning the primary.

As mentioned above, America's current presidential primary process involves both true [primary elections](#) and [caucuses](#)³.

Primary Elections vs. Caucuses- What's the Difference?

A [primary election](#) looks very much like any other kind of election: people show up to their designated polling place and cast a ballot. The only thing that distinguishes a primary from a general is that, in a primary, only candidates from one party are on the ballot.

² The primary process is not exclusive to presidential races; in fact, primaries are held for most political offices in the U.S., from Senators to City Council. Because this resolution is specific to presidential elections, however, that's what we'll be discussing in this paper.

³ Unless otherwise specified, going forward, you may assume that any time I say "primary" I mean "primary/caucus." It is sort of confusing that, in the context of electoral politics, "primary" refers both to the *overall* work of choosing a nominee and to *one specific method* used conduct that work, but so it goes. Just remember that, as we've already covered, the "primary process" includes both primary elections and caucuses.



In a [caucus](#)⁴, there is no traditional ballot to be filled out by individual voters. Instead, a caucus operates more like a meeting. During the caucus, attendees will give speeches, lobby one another, and debate and discuss amongst themselves the relative merits of the various candidates. Through this process, loyalists of each candidate attempt to persuade undecided voters to join in supporting their candidate. Once the majority of those in attendance reach an agreement, the 1st-place candidate is declared the winner. Caucus-goers may also deliberate on other party business besides just the presidential nominee. For example, they may also discuss future goals, select people to serve in party leadership roles, etc. [Here is a more detailed description of how caucuses work.](#)

Primary elections are organized, overseen, and paid for by the state's official government, while caucuses are organized exclusively by the state-level leadership of the political party. This plays a role in the decision of which type of contest to hold; the government picks up the tab if the party decides to have an election instead of a caucus, but they also implement certain rules governing scheduling and participation. Parties that want to evade these regulations might therefore opt for a caucus instead.

Primary elections can be "open" or "closed." A [closed primary](#) is one in which only voters who are preexisting, registered members of the party can vote. For example, in a closed Republican primary, the only voters would be those who officially registered themselves as a Republican prior to the date of the election. In closed primary systems, [independents](#) are excluded entirely from all primary voting. An [open primary](#), on the other hand, allows any registered voter from any party to participate—but only once. For example, a registered Democrat might choose to vote in the Republican primary, but she could not then turn around and also vote in the Democratic primary. Some states also hold [semi-closed primaries](#) (also called "hybrid primaries"), in which Independents can also vote in one party's primary or the other. In all of these systems, voters may only vote in a maximum of one primary; no one is allowed to vote in both parties' primaries. Whether the primary is open or closed is determined by state electoral law, rather than the parties themselves.

Because they are facilitated by the parties, caucuses are often (though not always) closed events. In fact, the desire to hold a closed contest, if state election law requires open primaries, is one reason a party might decide to have a caucus instead.

⁴ To understand exactly how a caucus works, we need to zoom out a little bit and talk about the role of delegates and party conventions, which we'll do coming up next.



Currently, about 3/4 of state parties hold primary elections, while the rest hold caucuses.

Delegates

[Delegates](#) are where things start to get really complicated. In the simplest possible terms, delegates are the people who attend the party convention to represent the outcome of their state’s primary election/caucus. Republicans and Democrats use different formulas for determining how many delegates are appropriated to each state (or territory), considering things like population, the party’s concentration of support in that state (i.e. do the state’s voters tend to overwhelmingly support one party, or is it tightly contested?), etc. The exact rules guiding delegate count determination typically change in both parties between each election cycle. Broadly speaking, though, less-populous states tend to receive fewer delegates than highly-populated states.

[Determining who gets to serve as a delegate](#) at a party’s national convention is itself a highly political process (meta!). The specifics of the selection system [vary](#) by party and by state. The state party leaders typically allocate a share of their total available delegate positions to each congressional district, again weighed according to factors like population and party loyalty. From there, individuals are chosen to become delegates. To accomplish this, [parties may also hold conventions at the state, district, and/or county level](#), where campaigning and voting for delegate positions take place⁵. This might also happen at the caucus, if the state party uses that system. Or, state party officials may simply hand-select the delegates.

Like many nationwide clubs and organizations, political parties are structured at a variety of levels⁶. You can think of this as analogous to the National Speech and Debate Association (NSDA). If you’re researching this topic, chances are that you’re a member of the NSDA. At your school, there is probably an official NSDA chapter, which is run by your debate coach and perhaps a slate of officers (president, VP, secretary, etc.), which were selected by vote by your peers. Your school’s NSDA chapter is part of a certain District. This District is responsible for selecting people to attend the National Tournament (that’s you!), which it does by holding a tournament that decides who qualifies. This District Tournament

⁵ Take it from someone who used to work as political campaign staff—this stuff goes on and on and on, *ad nauseum*

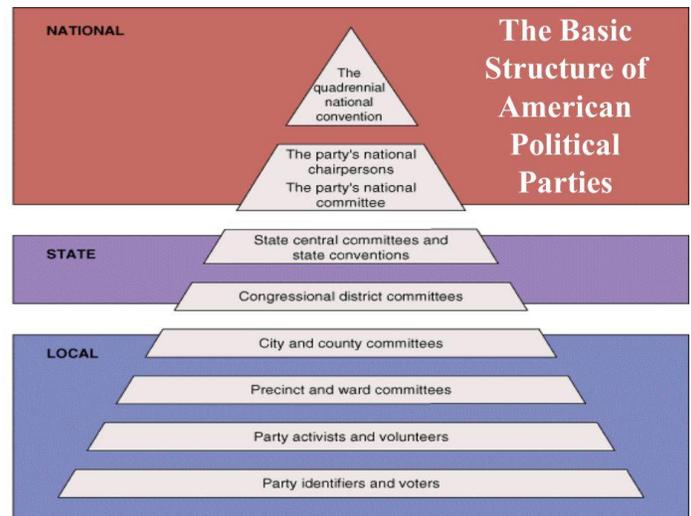
⁶ When we refer to “(national/state) party leadership,” we mean the people who make up the various administrative roles, committees, etc. that conduct the party’s business. These people operate the party itself. We do *not* mean elected government/political officials, like members of Congress or governors. Because party leadership is often determined based on voting at state/county/district/precinct/etc. conventions, some people mistakenly conflate party leadership with the political candidates themselves. While some states may reserve seats in their leadership for current elected officials from their party (such as a sitting governor or lieutenant governor), and while it is also common for retired politicians to later become involved with their party’s leadership, it is important to realize that “party leadership” means people running the party’s operations behind the scenes, and *not* the candidates themselves.



has to be managed by someone, and that's usually a council made up of representatives from the district's various member schools. At the national level, NSDA has a bunch of people running things in leadership roles, as well as committees made up of representatives from the various districts nationwide. Political parties are largely similar, made up of a hierarchy of local "chapters" that must choose their own leadership and send representatives to high-level meetings, up and up until they reach the party's National Committee.

Generally, political parties organize themselves according to something like this:

After a state's primary/caucus results are in, it is the delegates who are tasked with conveying the results at the national convention. Each state's delegates, therefore, inform the national party as to which candidate has the support of voters from that state. This is referred to as the delegate's "vote" at the national convention.



This brings us to yet another way of dividing types of primaries/caucuses: "binding" versus "non-binding." Most states have [binding primaries](#), in which delegates are legally *bound* to cast their vote according to the results of their local primary/caucus. With a binding primary system, then, the delegates can be understood as largely ceremonial messengers, conveying the outcome of a prior event. In a [non-binding primary](#), however, the delegates are *not* technically required to vote at the national convention in accordance with the majority of the state's voters. So, for example, 99% of voters in a state with a non-binding primary could theoretically vote for Candidate A, but there would be nothing *legally* preventing that state's delegates from unanimously supporting Candidate B at the convention⁷.

In binding primary states, the delegates' national convention nominating votes are determined by one of two methods. In **winner-take-all contests**, all of a state's delegates must vote for the candidate who was 1st place in that state's primary/caucus. In **proportional** systems, every candidate who reaches at least a certain minimum threshold of the

⁷ This is not especially common, since becoming a delegate in the first place typically requires substantial schmoozing with party activists within one's home state, and they tend to frown on blatantly disregarding the will of the people. However, it would be legally possible, and does happen occasionally on a less-extreme scale.



popular vote is awarded a proportional share of that state's delegates. For example, if the state has 100 delegates, and held a primary election in which 40% of voters supported Candidate A and 60% supported Candidate B, then 40 delegates would vote for Candidate A at the convention, and 60 would vote for Candidate B.

Every state designs their own system, so there is no nationwide consistency⁸. Different states use any number of various permutations of all of "types" of contests we've gone over: primary elections/caucuses, open/closed, binding/non-binding, winner-take-all/proportional. The state contests are also held on drastically different dates around the country, spanning about 4-5 months from first to last. This is why you'll hear pundits on TV poring over complicated, multivariate scenarios when making predictions during primary season as to who will become the parties' nominees.

In addition to the conventional delegate system described above, the Democrats also incorporate votes of people often referred to as "[superdelegates](#)" (although the party does not use that term officially). Superdelegates are party elites, often current and former high-ranking elected officials such as governors, members of Congress, and past presidents. State party officials are also included. Superdelegates are empowered to vote for whichever candidate they choose, and are not bound to the results of a primary/caucus, nor are they required to disclose who they'll support prior to the convention. In very close races, superdelegates could theoretically determine who becomes the nominee. Because, therefore, of the disproportionate size of their influence, [superdelegates are controversial](#) to many American voters.

For the 2016 presidential election cycle, the Democratic Party has a total of 4,765 delegates in play, 714 of which are superdelegates.

The Republican Party does not use independent superdelegates, but each state's 3 Republican National Committee (RNC) members do hold automatic "**unpledged delegate**" status. Contrary to what that name implies, however, The [RNC ruled in 2015](#) that unpledged delegates are *required* to cast their votes for the winner of their states' primary/caucus.

⁸ The specific mechanics of the status quo system don't just vary according to state; they are also different between Republicans and Democrats. There are numerous subtle distinctions between the two parties' systems, which I've tried to point out when they're relevant to the debate.



The Republican Party has 2,472 total delegates for 2016, of which 168 are “unpledged.”

National Conventions

In the United States, both major political parties officially nominate their presidential candidate for each election cycle at a 4-day-long event called a [party convention](#). The formal purpose of these conventions is to bring together representatives of the party to select a candidate, as well as to agree on things like the party’s official [platform](#) and the rules it will use for intra-party deliberations, including logistics for future elections. However, today’s conventions are more about generating publicity and media attention than they are venues for substantive deliberation or reform.

About 18 months before the convention is scheduled, the national leadership of the party will issue a “Call to Convention,” which invites state and local party officials to begin the candidate selection process. The Call to Convention informs them as to how many delegates they will be allotted, and lays out the procedures and rules to be used for the current election cycle. This allows them to begin making arrangements for the state’s primary election or caucus.

So, how do the conventions actually choose a nominee? At some point during the convention’s parade of speeches and ceremonies, there is a “roll call,” during which the delegation from each state (as well as any superdelegates, unpledged delegates, etc.) will announce their votes. The candidate who receives the majority of delegate votes (of all varieties) becomes the official nominee.

If no one candidate reaches a majority after the completion of the first roll call, a “[brokered convention](#)” results. In a brokered convention, every delegate is “released” and allowed to shift their allegiance to any candidate they wish. From that point forward, delegates lobby, debate, negotiate, and re-vote repeatedly until they are able to arrive at a majority decision.

Brokered conventions are uncommon, though. The last one occurred at the Democratic National Convention in 1952.



History of the Current Schedule- Why is Iowa First?

When learning about the status quo primary system, the first thing many people want to know is “why?” Is there any rhyme or reason behind our existing structure?

The simple answer is, “not really.”

Until the 1970s, parties usually did not hold primaries for their presidential candidates. For a long time, party bigwigs just got together and picked someone, and the rest of the country simply had to fall in line. Some primaries began to be held beginning in the early 20th century, but they were usually non-binding “beauty contests,” which served only to inform party leaders of public sentiment, but often did not influence their decision. Some states also held caucuses, but they were usually not publicized, and therefore only received input from those who were already well-connected within the party. This is the origin of the [“smoke-filled back room meetings” trope](#).

After a [divisive Democratic National Convention in 1968](#), the Democrats convened the [McGovern-Fraser Commission](#) to reform the selection process for the future. The Commission went on to rewrite the Democratic Party’s rules concerning delegate selection, mandating things like keeping the process open to all party members. Although these reforms were initiated by the Democrats, the Republican Party has largely come to follow those same rules, either because Democrat-controlled state legislatures codified them into state election law, and/or because Republican officials feared that the media attention generated by the primaries would give the Democrats a publicity advantage in the general election.

After the McGovern-Fraser changes were implemented, New Hampshire got proactive and passed a state law requiring that their primary take place before any other “similar contest.” This law gave the Secretary of State authority to move the primary ahead of any state trying to encroach on NH’s position.

So how did Iowa wind up first? Because it is a caucus and not a primary, it is not implicated in NH’s “similar contest” law. However, it actually began as [an accident](#). When the new reforms took effect after 1968, IA had to change their delegate selection process, but a number of scheduling problems forced them to move their state convention way, way up. In 1976, a surprise victory in the Iowa caucuses [helped Jimmy Carter catapult to the Democratic nomination](#), demonstrating the value of going first. Besides the obvious political influence advantage, as candidates began to



understand the caucuses' significance, Iowans also found themselves flush with economic stimulus flowing in from the campaigns and media personnel that flocked to the state before each presidential election. Unwilling to lose this major boon, Iowa passed a state law mandating that they maintain their position as the first presidential primary contest in the U.S.

Both parties have experimented with allowing states other than IA and NH to schedule their primaries/caucuses earlier in the year. However, determined to stay at the forefront of the primary season, this caused IA and NH to move their races even earlier, resulting in a January primary start in 2000. This scheduling arms race continued until 2008, at which point both parties informally agreed that IA, NH, NV, and SC would vote in February, and everyone else would be required to wait until March-June. This system is enforced by deducting delegates from states who refuse to comply.

From the perspective of the parties' national leadership, as well as candidates themselves, the current primary voting order has quite a bit to do with inertia and discomfort with the unfamiliar. Political professionals are familiar with conducting campaigns in these traditional early states; they know the risks, rewards, and moving pieces involved. No one with the power to enact changes is overly interested in shaking things up and finding themselves in an unpredictable situation when the stakes are high.

So, that explains how we got where we are now.

Congratulations—you should now be knowledgeable enough about the status quo to intelligently compare it to alternatives like a one-day national primary.



Strategic Options

Having just read the Background Info section, you've actually finished the hardest part of preparing for this topic. The array of substantive arguments to make is, for both sides of this topic, rather narrow and mostly straight-forward. This resolution will really reward debaters with a deep knowledge of the core of the topic, rather than the broader range of strategic considerations demanded by some other resolutions.

Simplicity & User-Friendliness

One obvious pro argument is the relative ease and simplicity a one-day national primary would offer over our current system. Instead of the present mishmash of rules and procedures, which (as you just experienced) can require pages upon pages of text to even begin to explain, "one-day national primary" largely describes the process right in the name.

This, according to many advocates, would be a meaningful improvement: people would actually remember *when* the primary was taking place and understand *how* their participation played a role in the eventual outcome. Moreover, an event held on a single day would lend itself to nationwide media buzz and collective excitement, which would further reinforce citizens' memory, attention, and investment. These factors may come together to increase the number of citizens who actually participate in the primary election process—something that offers a number of benefits, which we'll discuss in greater detail later on.

➤ *Pro Evidence: One-day= simpler*

(Barbara Norrander, professor of government and public policy at the University of Arizona, "The Imperfect Primary: Oddities, Biases, and Strengths of U.S. Presidential Nomination Politics," Routledge, Google Books, Feb 11 2015)

A one-day national primary seems simple. All across America, voters in every state would go to the polls on the same day to cast their ballots in either the Democratic or Republican primary. Whichever candidate won the national primary would automatically become the nominee for the party. This **is how primary elections are conducted for most other offices in the United States.** In a Republican primary election for a congressional seat, for example, if candidate A receives more votes than candidate B, candidate A becomes the Republican nominee. **There are no complicated formulas to translate candidates' votes into convention delegates. The American public likes the simplicity** of the single national presidential primary. A 1952 Gallup poll found 73 percent in favor. **A 2008 poll** conducted by CBS News **revealed 65 percent of Americans approved of a one-day national primary. The plan tends to be more popular with women, 20 older Americans, and those with less education and lower incomes.** The proposal for a single national primary is one of the oldest of the potential reforms. The first congressional proposal was introduced in 1911 the same time period when states were switching to the direct primary for nominating candidates for statewide and congressional offices. President Woodrow Wilson lent his support to the idea of a national presidential primary in a speech before Congress in 1913.²¹ He averred that the reform was uncontroversial and should be handled promptly. Yet, early proposals for a national presidential primary failed, as have more than 100 bills since that time.²² The national primary reform plan stalled during the early 20th century when arguments came forward that Congress did not have the constitutional authority to change the presidential nomination process. The general reform movement of the early 20th century also came to a close with the advent of World War I.²³ Modern **arguments in support of the national presidential primary focus on its presumed simplicity and fairness.** The winner of the national primary automatically becomes the party's presidential candidate. **Every voter has an**



equal chance to influence the outcome, since all cast their ballots on the same day. No longer will the field of candidates be winnowed by earlier primaries or caucuses, and **no longer would the race become irrelevant before all states have a chance** to hold their primary elections. **A national primary would eliminate the hodgepodge of rules** now used in the state-by-state primary system. **A single national date**, used over multiple election years, **would reduce voter confusion and increase turnout**.²

➤ *Pro Evidence: SQ fails*

(Emmett H. Buell [prof emeritus of polis sci at Denison University & former director of the Richard G. Lugar Program in Politics & Public Service] & William G. Mayer [prof of polis ci at Northeastern University & Member of the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association], "Enduring Controversies in Presidential Nominating Politics," University of Pittsburgh Press, Google Books, 2004)

Something is wrong with the way we choose presidents. I don't just mean that something went wrong in 1980. **Something is structurally wrong.** Columnists and editorial writers have been full of complaints. **The process goes on too long**, they say. **It takes too much money**, or more money than the candidates can raise legally. **Running for president is incompatible with doing anything else, and so unemployed politicians have an advantage, even if they are unemployed for good reasons. A narrow victory in a small state where few people bother to vote makes too much of a difference.** All these are justified complaints, but they don't get at the root of the matter, which is simply that **the primary system is a disaster. Primaries are indeed a way of sorting out candidates, but they systematically leave us with the worst ones.** Why? Ostensibly, primaries are the democratic way of choosing candidates, and the fight for more primaries and for open primaries (in which people can vote for either Republican or Democratic candidates) has been a democratic fight. Once the voters could only choose between two candidates, themselves chosen by party bosses. Now, many reforms later, they choose among a large number; every would-be president in the country is running, men and women with serious ambitions, single-issue candidates, politicians speculating on the future.

What Do Voters Think?

Another, similar pro argument is based in simple polling. Numerous surveys of American voters suggest that citizens would overwhelmingly prefer a streamlined, simplified primary process. Since this is a democratic country, pros might argue, there is inherent value to reforming our national institutions in accordance with the desires of the public.

➤ *Pro Evidence: ¾ support*

(New York Times, "Poll: One Single Primary," http://thecaucus.blogs.nytimes.com/2007/07/24/poll-one-single-primary/?_r=0, July 24 2007)

As many states continue to jockey for early dates in the presidential nomination process, **most American voters would like to establish a single national primary day according to a recent New York Times/CBS News Poll.**

Nearly three-quarters of the registered voters polled said they would prefer one nationwide day of contests to select each party's presidential nominee, although Republicans are slightly less inclined than Democrats and independents to support such a change in the long-established system of separately scheduled state primaries and caucuses. Voters in the West, where states have historically held their presidential primaries later in the season, are particularly supportive of creating a single day on which the whole country would select the nominees. Half of the voters surveyed said that states such as New Hampshire and Iowa, which have early nominating contests, have too much influence on who wins each party's nomination. Voters in the South, an area not represented in the earliest voting, are more negative about New Hampshire and Iowa than are those from other regions of the country that are represented earlier in the process.



➤ *Pro Evidence: Only 22% support SQ*

(YouGov, political polling & research firm, "Majority support for a national primary day," <https://today.yougov.com/news/2015/03/05/primaries/>, March 5 2015)

The 2016 presidential election is a year and a half away but politicians have already begun to declare their interest in running. Running for president is an arduous, drawn out task made all the more difficult by the need to win a party's nomination before the difficult work of winning over the entire public even begins. In order to become the candidate for either the Democratic or Republican party a candidate must win the endorsement of ordinary Democrats and Republicans in primary elections and caucuses across the entire country.

YouGov's latest research shows that **most Americans (54%) think that presidential campaigns are too long and drawn out. Only 23% of Americans say that they prefer a long campaign** which gives them a better chance of getting to know the candidates.

Currently **the primary** and caucus season stretches out over months, with the first Iowa caucuses **scheduled** to take place in January 2016. This **has been criticized for giving small states** such as Iowa and New Hampshire **undue influence as well as prolonging the** already lengthy presidential **election** campaign.

Most Americans (54%) want the primaries to all take place on the same day in May or early June. **Only 22% of Americans want the current system to continue.**

A single national primary day is particularly popular in the Northeast, where 64% of people want to consolidate all the days. The midwest has the highest proportion of people (25%) wanting to continue with the current system where primaries and caucuses are spread out over several months. Despite support for altering the timing of primaries, voters still want a say in selecting each party's candidates. Only 14% of Americans think that party delegates should select a party's candidates, while 64% think that primary elections and caucuses are the best way to make nominations.

➤ *Pro Evidence: "Overwhelming approval"*

(Rhodes Cook, senior political writer for Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report & contributing editor for Public Perspective, "The Presidential Nominating Process: A Place for Us?," Rowman & Littlefield, Google Books, 2004)

If **a one-day nationwide primary vote is** ultimately adopted, it would probably be **okay with** most **American voters. They have given their overwhelming approval to the concept in an array of** Gallup **Polls** taken from 1952 through 1988. Support for a national primary has ranged from a low of 56 percent in the mid-1950s to 76 percent in the wake of the tumultuous 1968 Democratic convention in Chicago. **Opposition to the idea** during this 36-year span **never exceeded 27 percent.**

➤ *Pro Evidence: Most popular alternative*

(Emmett H. Buell [prof emeritus of polis sci at Denison University & former director of the Richard G. Lugar Program in Politics & Public Service] & William G. Mayer [prof of polis ci at Northeastern University & Member of the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association], "Enduring Controversies in Presidential Nominating Politics," University of Pittsburgh Press, Google Books, 2004)

No approach to changing the present system is more often proposed or **more popular than** the idea of substituting **a direct national primary** for the national convention. **Congressman Richard Hobson (D-Ala.) introduced the first such bill in 1911, and a veritable flood of national primary proposals has inundated Congress since.** As table 17 shows, a large proportion of these proposals have issued from relatively few sponsors. Sen. William Langer (R-N.D.) introduced ten bills in the 1940s and 1950s, for example, as did Rep. Al Ullman (D-Ore.) in the 1960s and 1970s. More than half of the total number of such measures originated after 1967. As for popularity, table 18 shows that **in polls** taken between 1952 and 1988 **large majorities of Americans consistently**

preferred a direct national primary to national nominating conventions. Party breakdowns reveal only small differences in the percentage of favorable responses. Moreover, apparent swings in Democratic enthusiasm generally coincide with similar shifts among Republicans. These patterns differ markedly from the results Gallup obtained from infrequent samples of elites (not shown in the table). Only 52 percent of roughly 3,000 Democratic county chairmen sampled in 1972 wanted to replace national conventions with a direct primary. Similarly, a mere 47 percent took this position in a 1982 mail survey of "opinion leaders" drawn from Who's Who in America.²⁴ No direct primary bill has come close to enactment in Congress or adoption by a national party. Because Gallup's question did not measure intensity of commitment or respondents' knowledge of presidential nominating politics, party leaders probably dismissed these majorities as shallow and uninformed. In some

respects, however, **even severe critics** have **acknowledged that a direct national primary would address important inequities in the present system.** Ranney, for example, grants **that a "one-day" national primary would bring** unprecedented **uniformity and simplicity** to the nominating process. **The undue advantage enjoyed by** New Hampshire and a few other **small states would vanish** if every state voted on the same day. Ranney also argues that **voters in a direct national primary would represent the party's following more** so than national convention delegates.²⁵



However, the con might also point out that primaries are unrelated to the issue of voter enfranchisement, because their only function is to decide which candidate a particular private club (political party) will support, not to actually select an office holder.

In other words, democratic disenfranchisement only occurs when a citizen is denied the opportunity to cast a vote in a general election, which is the contest that actually determines the next president (or governor, senator, etc.). Denying someone the ability to vote in a primary, however, only stops them from having a say in who the party will endorse. Because parties, once again, are private clubs and not official components of the U.S. government, no citizen has any actual right to representation within a party.

➤ *Con Evidence: Primaries \neq voter enfranchisement*

(Daren Jonescu, prof of philosophy at Changwon National University in South Korea & Ph.D. in Philosophy from McMaster University, "GOP Primary Process Rigged," American Thinker, http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/04/gop_primary_process_rigged.html, April 19 2016)

The **Trumpsters claim that Colorado's caucus rules were unfair because they disenfranchised the voters** of that state. On its face, **this is analogous to screaming "censorship" when your sister asks you not to swear in front of her children** during Christmas dinner at her house. **This is not a free speech issue. It's her home; you were free not to accept her dinner invitation, and she is free to protect her children**, in her home, **from language she dislikes. If you accept her invitation, then you have to play by the house rules. Similarly, a party nomination process does not represent a citizen's franchise, because it is not a vote for public office. It is the process whereby a non-governmental club chooses its candidate for public office. Members of the club who are invited to participate,** and neither deceived nor defrauded out of that participation, **have no grounds for claiming even a figurative disenfranchisement, regardless of whether they like the rules governing the process.** In Colorado, Trump was invited, but chose not to participate actively. In short, if you want to swear your head off on Christmas Day, host your own dinner; likewise, **if you don't like a party's nominating rules, start your own party.** What's stopping you? (I admit that the principle here would be clearer if American **political parties** were still what they once were, and what parties in some Western democracies still **are: private alliances of likeminded citizen-members who pool their resources to promote causes and candidates.** America's once figurative "two-party system" has devolved into a literal one, with two parties converted through legislative controls into de facto branches of state governments, rather than the private clubs they ought to be in a free republic.)



Voter Turnout

As we've already touched on, a common impact claim on this topic stems from voter participation, also referred to as "turnout" (as in "everyone turned out to the polls on election day").

Voter turnout in the United States is chronically low in all elections, but participation rates for primaries are particularly abysmal. In 2012, just [16%](#) of eligible voters nationwide turned out to vote in the presidential primary process. Although the 2016 primary race has been enjoying [record high turnout](#) rates, that "record" still remains at a decidedly uninspiring [~24%](#).

➤ *Pro Evidence: One-day improves turnout*

(James Q. Wilson, former Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University, chairman of the Council of Academic Advisors of the American Enterprise Institute, member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board & Director of Joint Center for Urban Studies at Harvard-MIT, "American Government: Brief Version," Cengage Learning, Google Books, Jan 2011)

A single national primary permits equal participation by all states and presents a fair compromise with the increased number of delegates that larger states send to the national conventions, much like the compromises during the original constitutional debates.

The nominating process needs to be less costly, particularly when presidential candidates realistically need to raise \$100 million a year before the general election to be competitive for the nomination. **Holding all primaries and caucuses on a single day will reduce overall election expenses significantly. If the American electorate knows presidential nominations will be decided by each party on one day, then they will be more likely to vote—a significant factor for elections in which, historically, fewer than 20 percent of eligible voters typically participate.**

On the other hand, the con might point out that voter turnout in the U.S. is also extremely low, in comparison to other advanced democracies, at the general election stage of the race. The general takes place nationwide on one day, which indicates that moving the primaries to one single day would not, by itself, solve our problems with low participation.

➤ *Con Evidence: Alternate causality- General elections prove*

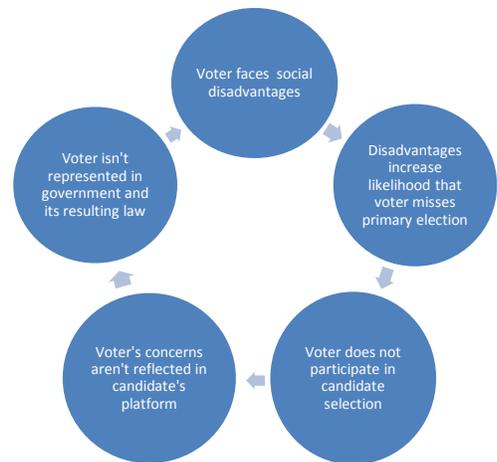
(James Q. Wilson, former Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University, chairman of the Council of Academic Advisors of the American Enterprise Institute, member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board & Director of Joint Center for Urban Studies at Harvard-MIT, "American Government: Brief Version," Cengage Learning, Google Books, Jan 2011)

Each state decides in conjunction with the national party when its primary or caucus will take place, and the federal system of government designed by the Framers did not guarantee that all states would be treated equally at all times. A national primary would favor candidates with high name recognition and funding to further that recognition and would severely disadvantage lesser-known candidates within the party. **Even though the general election takes place on one day, voter turnout in the United States still is lower than in other advanced industrialized democracies, which suggests that other factors influence who participates.**



So, what are the impacts to turnout? For obvious reasons, it is not in the best interests of a democracy to experience such low voter participation. Those who don't vote, although due to their own choice, by definition do not receive democratic representation. It may seem easy to dismiss this problem by noting that it is the non-voters' own fault for failing to make an effort. While that's not untrue, low voter participation has measurable negative effects on the entire system, impacting us all.

First, low turnout risks perpetuating a variety of systemic injustices, due to its position in a [cycle of marginalization](#). The citizens who are statistically least likely to vote, and most likely to be prevented from voting by issues like not knowing what date the election would be held on, are those who are already disadvantaged: citizens with below-average levels of education and income, which disproportionately includes racial and ethnic minorities, single-parent families, young people, and LGBTQIA+ Americans. When citizens who are already vulnerable find themselves unable to vote, they can't use their ballots to push for the sorts of reforms that might benefit them. Those more fortunate citizens, who are more likely to vote, often do not share the disadvantaged's concerns, and indeed may likely not even be aware of them at all.



Returning to our "school emperor" example, if no one on the debate team participated in the election, the student body could very well elect an emperor who didn't even know the school *had* a debate team! It would be no surprise, then, when the debate team did not receive funding for the next year.

The harms here affect everybody, though. It is not *just* that those who don't vote may not see their own interests protected. There is also the even more basic fact that diverse societies are best equipped to solve the numerous, complex problems they face when they are governed by leaders with a broad array of perspectives, experiences, and backgrounds.

What problems you identify as demanding solutions, what kinds of solutions you propose, how you'd seek to implement them, and how you weigh competing concerns are all influenced heavily by your particular background. If you lived your



whole life with great wealth, and only interacted with other wealthy people, and suddenly were tasked with writing a monthly budget for a low-income household, you would likely struggle. Your life experiences and background would not have prepared you to respond adeptly to that particular challenge, because it isn't something you would have ever before had any reason to worry about.

But you could also think of the opposite scenario: just as the rich person may lack the skills to effectively manage a tight budget, a person whose entire life has been spent in poverty may not know the first thing about managing an investment portfolio. If you're always struggled to feed your family, it's unlikely that you've ever had a reason to teach yourself about whether you'd profit more from putting your spare \$500,000 in this stock or that bond, for example.

In the government of a large, modern nation such as the United States, government officials have to respond to a tremendous array of possible issues, all of which ripple out and affect still other issues, and have the potential to inflict an infinite number of unintended repercussions. If leaders don't know something is a problem, because their personal blind-spots prevent them from even noticing it in the first place, then all of us are apt to suffer. That's why it benefits everyone to have a variety of perspectives represented in government.

A second reason why low voter turnout is problematic is that it may undermine the [legitimacy](#) of the government. Since [John Locke](#), many political theorists have contended that consent of the governed is a prerequisite to government legitimacy. But how can a nation claim to be a true and legitimate democracy if, in reality, 75% or more of its population fail to participate in significant elections? The consent of some 16% of the nation is hardly a robust democratic mandate.

The third possible impact to low voter turnout, and perhaps the most concrete, is ideological polarization.

Although there is debate on the question, most [polling](#) and [analysis](#) suggests that the United States citizenry *on average* is ideologically [centrist](#) or center-right. Why, then, is our national political conversation often so shrill and dominated by ideological extremists? If most Americans have a mixture of conservative and liberal viewpoints, why can't Congress seem to agree on even the simplest measures?



Some suggest that low rates of voter participation, *especially in the primaries*, plays a major role. Because primary elections are subject to confusing rules and held on an ever-changing calendar of weird dates, the people who actually show up to vote in them are typically the *most* committed partisans.

On general election day, the whole nation votes on a consistent, predictable date, at a consistent, predictable place (your assigned polling location is unlikely to move unless you do), and your party affiliation doesn't change anything about the process. In contrast, primary elections fluctuate significantly (even if you don't move, your primary contest date may fall on vastly different dates from one election to the next), may be held in locations other than your standard polling place, and often require you to take the additional advance step of becoming an official member of the party. People who are passionately devoted to their favored political party are *much* more likely to bother confronting all of these obstacles than the average ["swing" voter](#).

Polarization

As we just discussed, the complexity of the American presidential primary process is one reason why the system might create polarizing effects. However, there are also several other internal links to polarization.

Another important factor is voter targeting. Today, political campaigns have access to vast [databases of voter information](#), from which they can pull lists of voters to target for outreach according to a variety of specific criteria. Furthermore, although many people do not realize this, your voting history—not who you voted for, but whether or not you voted at all—is a matter of public record, and is already loaded into the sophisticated campaign software systems used by every major candidate.

If, as a campaign manager in the field office for a certain city⁹, I want to create a list of addresses/email addresses/phone numbers belonging only to voters aged 30-35 who have voted in at least 3/5 of the last primary elections, I can do that with the click of a button. Additionally, because both Democrats and Republicans have proprietary databases that they share with all of their party's candidates, over time the profiles they are able to build on every individual voter can become quite robust.

⁹ I have actually, in real life, held these kinds of campaign jobs within the past 5 years, so I know of what I speak.



Campaign databases don't just track objective information like your phone number and whether you voted in your last city council race, they also record [more subjective data points](#), as well. The idea is to enable campaigns to identify, before even speaking to you, the likelihood that you will support the candidate in question.

How do they do this? If you've ever been to a campaign rally or event, you were probably asked to register or sign in somewhere. That participation, rest assured, was recorded in the party's database. Likewise if you've signed a petition or open letter of some kind, *especially* the kind you tend to find circulating on social media. If a campaign representative knocks on your door or calls your phone to speak with you about an upcoming election, every response you provide is added to your voter file. Some campaigns may also choose to purchase additional supplementary data from outside vendors, such as those who make their money harvesting your information from social networks, web browsing habits, and online shopping history. So, within a few election cycles at most, political parties can usually predict *whether* and *how* you'll vote in an upcoming election with a fairly high degree of confidence.

What does that have to do with polarization? *Everything.*

Because campaigns can tell how "active" of a voter you have proven to be in the past, and which party or belief system you tend to support, they can quickly discriminate as to what kinds of communications to send to you, or whether to bother trying to talk to you at all.

Another thing that many people don't know about modern political campaigns is that what the industry calls "persuasion" is [often a relatively low priority](#). Campaigns run several types of operations, sometimes concurrently and sometimes in phases. "Persuasion" is where staffers attempt to convince undecided voters to support their candidate, or opponents to change their minds and swap loyalties. Although this certainly does occur, [most of the focus is often on "mobilization,"](#)—turning out those voters who are seen as a "sure thing" for the party as long as they show up to vote on election day.

If I have \$X to spend on trying to winning a campaign, it is almost always smarter to spend that money making sure "Amy," whose profile in my database tells me has been a strong supporter of my party for many years, shows up to the



polls, versus spending my budget trying to convince “Bob,” whose profile indicates he has no allegiance to either party, that he should pick my candidate.

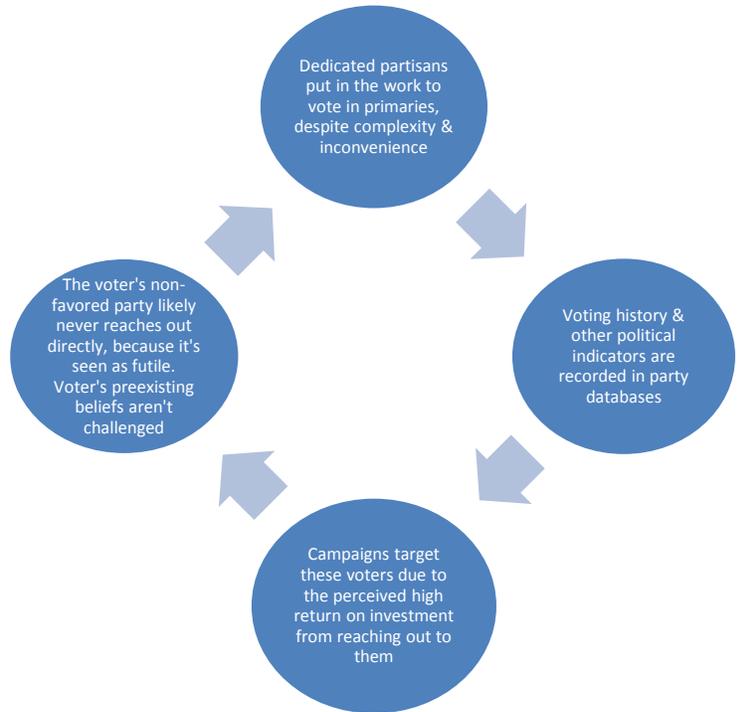
Because of the numerous, already-discussed factors that make participating in primaries relatively burdensome, only the voters who already feel a very strong allegiance to their political party are likely to show up.

Campaigns know this, so they often target their primary-stage outreach towards people known to be committed partisans and regular participants in primaries. Their massive databases help them do this with considerable information about individual voters.

Committed partisans, of course, are that way *because* they have strong ideological beliefs. The only reason to become an active member of a particular political party is because you agree strongly with that party’s outlook.

Therefore, when a presidential campaign makes strategic decisions about what kinds of positions to take in the primary, there is a strong incentive for them to appeal to the most extreme members of their party, since these people are the most likely to actually show up to vote.

If a candidate is addressing a crowd full of moderate, swing-voting independents, then positioning him/herself as the “most liberal/conservative choice there is” is unlikely to be strategic. If I’m addressing a crowd full of known die-hard liberals/conservatives, however, then that approach is highly effective.

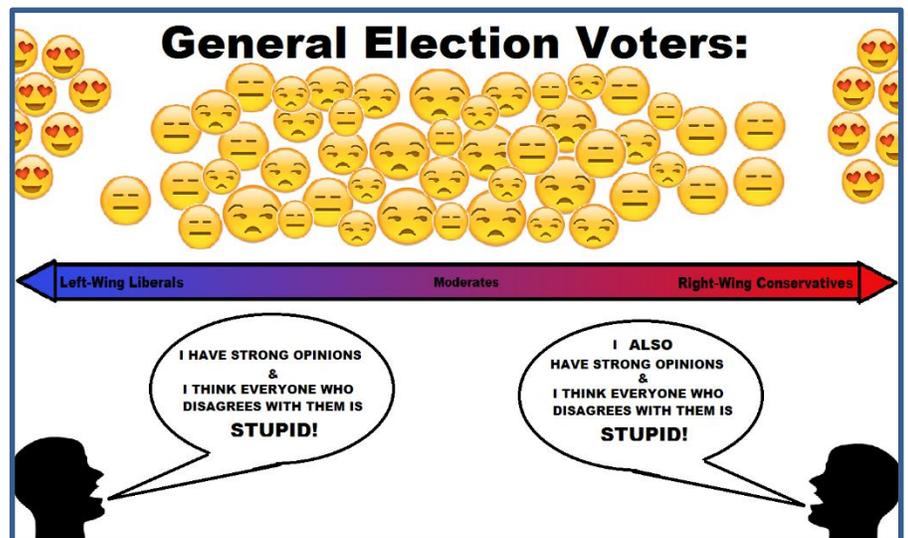
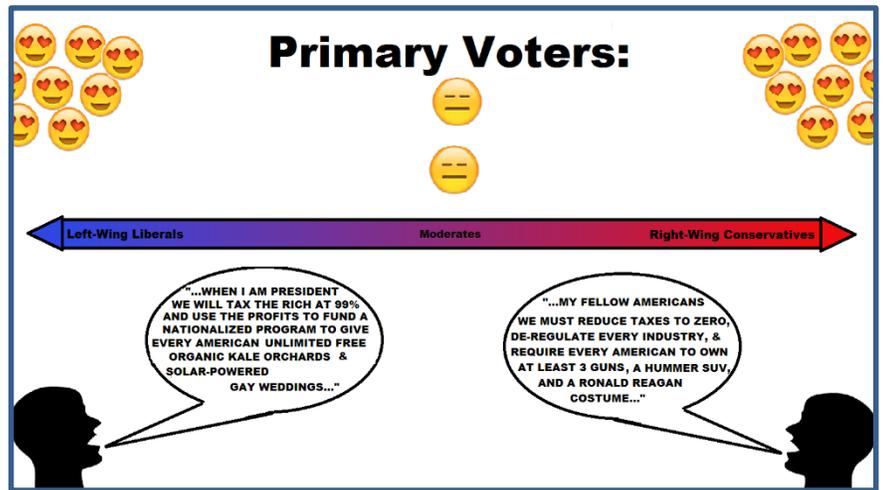


In this context, campaigns have every reason to paint their candidate as the only true, dyed-in-the-wool ideological option, and all of the competing candidates as phonies who won't hesitate to "sell out" to the demands of the other party.

So, why does polarization matter? There are many reasons. It causes tensions and erodes trust and cooperation between groups—something that obviously inhibits the smooth functioning of the democratic process. We can see this in today's Congress, which often seems to approach issues more as a zero-sum game in which one side can only win when the other loses, instead of the cooperative problem-solving activity that lawmaking ought to be. It affects those of us outside the beltway, too—if you've ever spent a family event arguing with a relative over politics, you know what I mean. Generally, operating under the assumption that half of the population is stupid, evil, or both is not particularly conducive to optimal social advancement. We'd all almost certainly be better off in a less polarized environment.

More specifically, advanced polarization sometimes leads to outcomes that, although achieved through the democratic electoral process, many would consider anti-democratic.

When the country is very polarized, and particularly when people on the "fringe" of both sides of the ideological spectrum are substantially more likely to participate in the primary system than are moderates and swing voters, the system becomes distorted. If the "extremists" (relatively speaking) within a party are given disproportionate influence in choosing that party's candidate, they will tend to select the more-extreme candidates. If the majority of the general citizenry are more moderate, they will thus constantly find themselves stuck choosing between 2 or 3 distasteful options, none of whom really reflect their beliefs or interests. This is why so many voters today express that their choice is often more about who to vote *against* than who to vote *for*.





This is why you'll often hear political pundits discussing campaigns' primary strategies as "ginning up the base" and then "moving back to the center" in the general election. Remember, in most primaries, only members of the party can vote, meaning the opposing wishes of the other party aren't present to "balance out" the extremists.

Basically, a candidate must pander to the extreme wings of his or her party in order to survive the primary, and then attempt to slide back towards the middle to capture some swing voters and Independents once they receive the nomination.

➤ *Pro Evidence: SQ primaries increase polarization*

(Shanna Pearson Merkowitz, Associate Professor of Political Science at the University of Rhode Island, "The Case for a National Primary," *Pacific Standard*, <https://psmag.com/the-case-for-a-national-primary-a9df696216de#.r2wsjj9gk>, May 13 2014)

In all of the debate and punditry over the extent of polarization in American politics today and the abhorrence with which voters view Congress and many of their governors, one factor seems to be missing from the discussion: How little input the American people currently have into their choices of candidates. **Every American** registered with a political party, and in some states even those who are not, **has the ability to weigh in** on whom **the nominees for the general** election will be — **but few** people **actually do. One major reason is that few voters even know when the primary election will take place.** This year, there are 36 gubernatorial primaries scheduled, 33 of which will be held before Labor Day. In fact, several high-profile gubernatorial primaries, including those in Texas, Illinois, and Ohio, already passed. In addition, of course, congressional primaries also will be held in each of the 50 states — many while kids are out of school and families are away on summer vacation. In the Texas gubernatorial primary in March, just over 14 percent of registered voters cast a ballot (barely 10 percent of the voting-age population). In Illinois, a state in which the incumbent governor has a job approval rating of just 31 percent, only 1.2 million out of more than seven million registered voters participated in the primary. While voter turnout in both states was down slightly from previous gubernatorial primaries, these figures are pretty consistent with the norm — and these states are not exceptional. Even **in the 2012 presidential primaries**, which attracted far more attention than off-year congressional and gubernatorial contests, **participation ranged from a low of 0.3 percent of eligible voters** (Wyoming's Republican caucus) to 31 percent of eligible voters (North Carolina's presidential primary). Several factors contribute to such low turnout. One, obviously is that in most primaries, voters can't choose based simply on the candidate's party identification; instead, they are forced to pick from among relatively similar candidates vying for the party nomination. This makes things particularly tough for the average voter, who relies on their party identification to help determine their vote. There are things that make up for this deficiency though — particularly news coverage and other sources of information about candidates that help voters sift through the positions of those running with less effort than they would otherwise have to expend. But **the primary schedule itself poses an institutional obstacle to voting: People are asked to go to the polls on a date they don't ordinarily associate with an election.** This year's gubernatorial and congressional primaries span from March to September, **with no apparent rhyme or reason for their chosen date**, which creates a multitude of problems. **Major national news outlets rarely report when a primary election will be held, particularly since that date varies widely by state.** And when local news outlets do focus on a primary, the viewer might just as easily be consuming information intended for a state they don't live in, since media markets are not set by political boundaries. In Nevada, for example, most rural voters fall into the Salt Lake City, Utah, media market, but Nevada's primary is being held on June 10 and Utah's is two weeks later, on June 24. The South Carolina gubernatorial primary is on June 10, but North Carolina's has already passed (May 6) and Georgia's is on a different date (June 16). These three states share several media markets. **This leaves voters in a quandary.** Not only do they have to sift through candidates running low-budget campaigns that receive little major news coverage, but **they also have to figure out and remember when the election is taking place. Low voter turnout in primary elections leads to a situation that no democratic theorist desires: Those most likely to vote in such elections are highly educated, wealthy, politically active** homeowners — **and**, perhaps most importantly, they are also **very ideological. The voters** most able to sort through the differences between the candidates and **who feel compelled to vote in the primary tend to be those at the ideological poles who are passionate about their** sometimes **extreme positions.** Adding insult to injury, **candidates exacerbate the effect by strategically targeting "super voters" — people who vote religiously in primary elections. This means that residents who don't have a proven track record of voting in primaries never get a phone call or a knock on their door** asking them to vote, **and they rarely receive any materials about the candidates. The end result of this bias in turnout produces candidates chosen by a minority of voters who are not representative of the actual make-up of** the country or even of



the state they are supposed to represent. But these are the candidates that voters must pick between on the November ballot — that is, if there is even a competitive general election. It's unlikely that the polarized news coverage of politics is going to change any time soon. Nor is it likely that the Supreme Court is going to change its ruling concerning who gets to fund elections. But **making primaries more accessible to the average voter could go a long way toward producing more moderate candidates who are more representative of their constituents. The most effective** of these **changes would be to have one day when the whole country gets to weigh in** on the candidates. Even if it took place during the summer, **a unified national primary would** most likely **drastically increase the level of news coverage** of candidates **and allow** non-partisan **groups to run get-out-the-vote drives nationally, instead of** having to run **costly local date-specific campaigns. Such a change would** also **have a positive impact on the selection process** for presidential candidates. No longer would New Hampshire residents receive well more than their fair share of attention and campaign spending from presidential hopefuls while other states risked being stripped of their convention delegates by the political parties for scheduling their primary too early. The creation of the "Super Tuesday" presidential primary in 1976 was an attempt by a number of states to achieve a relative degree of equality between their voters and elevate their importance in the process. But Super Tuesday is barely super anymore. In 2012, only 11 states voted on March 6. While more states use the first Tuesday in March than any other date, the number is hardly enough to warrant disproportionate attention from the national media. And given how few states vote on that day, the extra attention paid to Super Tuesday would just as likely have confused voters in other states as helped voters for whom Super Tuesday is applicable. This year, there is not a single date I could point to on which more states are holding their primaries than any other. In fact, Tennessee, eschewing national tradition, is holding its election on August 7 — a Thursday instead of a Tuesday. Ironically, the Progressive Era reforms that led to the implementation of **the primary system we have today** were intended to increase participation by voters in the selection of candidates. Unfortunately, like many such reforms, it **led** instead **to a less-active, less participatory electorate in which ideologues who are much more extreme than the leaders of the two national political parties often control the choice of candidates.**

➤ *Pro Evidence: National primary reduces polarization*

(Danielle Kurtzleben, political reporter, "No Way To Pick A President? Here Are 6 Other Ways To Do It," NPR, <http://www.npr.org/2016/01/26/463870736/no-way-to-pick-a-president-here-are-6-other-ways-to-do-it>, Jan 26 2016)

Pros

A national primary would eliminate worries about one or two states having outsize sway by virtue of voting super early. Not only that, but **it would make a complicated calendar way less complex and stop the constant shifting of dates.** And **by eliminating** a bunch of **confusion, it might make primaries "more accessible to the average voter," which could** in turn **make for "more moderate candidates who are more representative of their constituents,"** as Pacific Standard's Shanna Pearson-Merkowitz wrote in 2014.

If you choose to include this line of argumentation into your case, remember that (as with any sort of argument), you must set up your framework and various supporting arguments in such a way as to make it clear why any of this matters. What are the impacts? Why should your judge vote to reduce polarization (or whatever)? All of that should be robustly developed; don't count on them intuiting the significance of the problem.



On the con side, there is also the option to defend polarization as something of a necessary evil. According to this line of thought, politicians need to have well-known, dependable stances on issues, backed up by the strong support of an established structure, to be effective policymakers within a democratic system. Without this system, candidates' positions on the issues would become fluid and unpredictable, and elections would degenerate into pure popularity contests, where voters select the person they find most likeable, rather than the person whose policy agenda best matched their own.

➤ *Con Evidence: Strong party identification key to good leadership*

(Emmett H. Buell [prof emeritus of polis sci at Denison University & former director of the Richard G. Lugar Program in Politics & Public Service] & William G. Mayer [prof of polis ci at Northeastern University & Member of the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association], "Enduring Controversies in Presidential Nominating Politics," University of Pittsburgh Press, Google Books, 2004)

The people have broken into the innermost citadel of the parties; there are no back rooms left for the bosses. The reform movement has been driven by a simple creed: **the more primaries, the more participants, the more democracy.** If the resulting **process is exhausting, then we can simplify it** and make it even more democratic **by** eliminating the states with their uneven populations and uneven political effects, and **establishing** regional or **national primaries. This would only make things worse.** But **the problem is** not too much democracy. The **defenders of primaries never have come to grips with the requirements of a party system,** even of a party system as attenuated as ours is (or was, for now it is not so much attenuated as disintegrated). **Democratic politics generated parties for a reason. The purpose of a party system is to provide** us with **candidates who represent a certain set of interests,** not some random, self-selected portion of the general electorate. Its purpose is also to provide us with candidates **whose positions are widely and dependably known and who are likely to stand by those positions because they are tied into a stable network of commitments and alliances. A democracy needs candidates of this sort, or the election** loses all political form, and **degenerates into a public relations contest. And only candidates like this can govern effectively. Only candidates who have support within their party and who can mobilize its members,** both during and after the campaign, **can attempt serious political initiatives once they are in office** (or, out of office, lead an effective opposition). If this is right, then the **candidates must be chosen by the active members and the** local and national leaders of the **party. After that the citizens as a whole,** those who have been involved in the nominating process and those who have not, **choose** between (or **among**) **the parties and their leaders** rather than among some assortment of would-be leaders. **Leaders come with labels attached, testifying to their commitments** and associates. The citizens act, then, exactly as President Carter, in the last week of his campaign, asked the American people to act: pay attention, he told us, to my party label. But he had not been chosen by any such process as I have just described, and hardly looked like a Democrat. Nor did any of us have any clear sense of how he would act if re-elected. **Our presidential nominating process** has changed dramatically since the 1960s when John F. Kennedy entered just four contested state primaries. **Once shaped mainly by** state and national **party leaders,** it **is increasingly shaped by single-interest groups and the media.** The formal nominating process begins with the Iowa caucus in January of an election year and lumbers through more state caucuses and conventions and thirty-six primary elections before candidates are finally selected at national party conventions in July and August.



Undue Influence of Early-Voting States

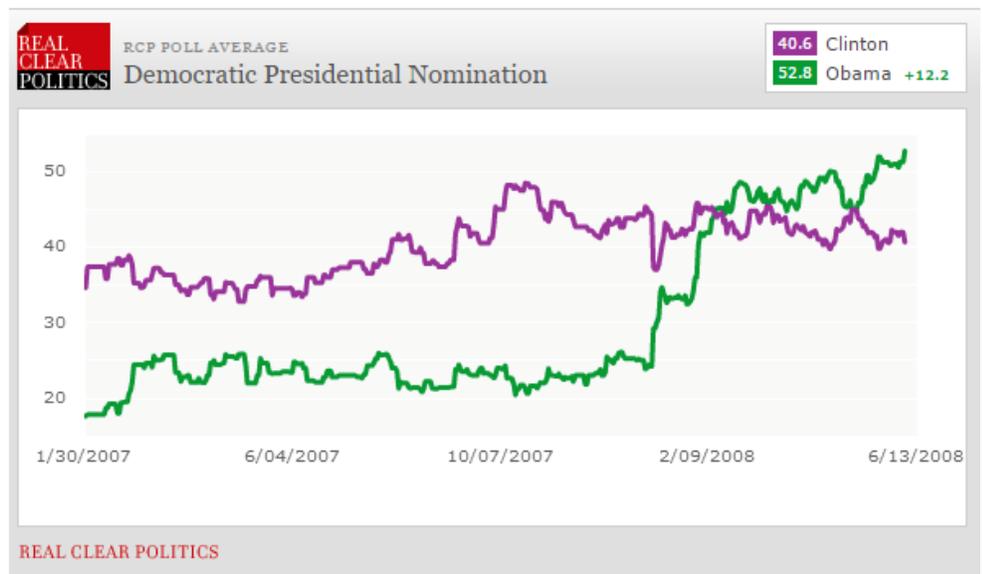
Another common point pro teams might make concerns the status quo's disproportionate weighting of early-voting states over those with later primary contest dates.

This one is pretty self-explanatory. We're all familiar with the importance of momentum in politics. It works much like any other kind of trend. As something (say, a candidate) becomes more popular, a greater number of new individuals become exposed and decide to get on board. Once a very large number of people are supportive, it becomes more and more appealing for other people to follow suit. This is why Barack Obama went from a long-shot candidate in 2008 to become the president, and why the masses will collectively adopt an ugly fashion trend. Human beings tend to watch each other and are more likely to support something once they see their peers endorsing it, too.

To see an example of momentum in action, check out this graph showing the dramatic change in public support between Clinton and Obama from 2007 through the Democratic National Convention in 2008:

In primary season, momentum is especially important. When the first contest begins, there are typically numerous candidates in the race. The people of IA and NH, then, have a fairly broad pool to choose from.

But running for president is expensive, and campaigns that don't immediately begin picking up momentum are often deserted by financial backers, who choose jump ship and invest their funding in a more plausible candidate. The national party leadership, too, can begin putting pressure on under-performing candidates to pull out of the race and clear the field for the frontrunners.





So, if you vote in a state whose contest takes place several months after the process begins, you may very well find that your options are much more limited than what the early voters had. Sometimes, you may not even get a choice at all. For example, ~15 GOP primaries this year fall *after* the date at which only Donald Trump was left on the Republican ticket.

In fact, research out of Brown University suggests that citizens who vote in early-season primaries have up to 5x as much influence on who becomes the eventual nominee versus later voters.

➤ *Pro Evidence: Early voters have 5x more influence*

(Brown University, "Voters have up to five times more influence in early primaries," *ScienceDaily*, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2011/06/110610094503.htm, June 10 2011)

As the nation gears up for the 2012 presidential election, potential candidates are making frequent stops in New Hampshire and Iowa. Research by a Brown University economist, published in *The Journal of Political Economy*, shows that **voters in early primary states have a disproportionate influence on who gets elected. Voters in states with early primary races** such as Iowa and New Hampshire **have up to five times the influence of voters in later states in selecting presidential candidates, according to research by Brown University economist Brian Knight.** The paper, the first to quantify the effects of early victories in the race for the presidential nomination, is co-authored by Nathan Schiff and published in *The Journal of Political Economy*. "Evidence **that early voters have a disproportionate influence** over the selection of candidates **violates 'one person-one vote' -- a democratic ideal on which our nation is based.**" Knight and Schiff developed a statistical model that examines how daily polling data responds to returns from presidential primaries. In the model, candidates can benefit from momentum effects when their performance in early states exceeds expectations. For example, Knight and Schiff found that **in 2004, John Kerry benefited from surprising wins in early states and took votes away from Howard Dean, who held a strong lead prior to the beginning of the primary season.** According to their research, Schiff and Knight predict that **if states other than Iowa and New Hampshire had voted first in 2004, the Democratic nominee may have been John Edwards, rather than John Kerry.** "Clearly, **the primary calendar plays a key role in the selection of the nominee.**" said Knight, associate professor of economics. "Evidence that early voters have a disproportionate influence over the selection of candidates violates 'one person-one vote' -- a democratic ideal on which our nation is based." Knight and Schiff **also simulate the 2004 primary as a simultaneous national primary, which** they predict would have been much tighter than Kerry's landslide victory, due to the absence of momentum effects. Additionally, the research **demonstrates how this disproportionate influence of early voters affects candidates' allocation of campaign resources, as measured by advertising expenditures.** They found that **candidates spent a disproportionately high amount in states with early primaries.** The economists conclude, "While these results are specific to the 2004 primary, we feel that they are informative more generally in the debate over the design of electoral systems in the United States and elsewhere..."

Again, one can easily argue that this is undemocratic. Why do two states such as Iowa and New Hampshire, which are unusually rural and extremely demographically un-representative of the U.S. populace as a whole, decide who gets to kick off the race as the frontrunner? Does this system create a chain of events that arbitrarily and unfairly influenced the outcome of the rest of the election?



Pros, of course, can claim that this is a major problem.

➤ *Pro Evidence: Early voting states have undue influence; causes problems*

(Jake Flanagan, political writer & journalist, "Iowa and New Hampshire wield too much influence. The US needs a national primary," Quartz, <http://qz.com/602487/iowa-and-new-hampshire-wield-too-much-influence-the-us-needs-a-national-primary/>, Jan 28 2016)

Every four years, the two major political parties in the United States select their candidates for president by way of primary elections and caucuses. These are held, **state-by-state**, starting in February of a given election year, the first two being the Iowa Precinct **Caucuses** (Feb. 1, 2016) and the New Hampshire Primary (Feb. 9). And that **is a rubbish way to go about things.**

Being the first states to cast ballots for party nominees comes with an awful lot of undue power and influence. Iowa and New Hampshire essentially set the tone for the rest of the primary season, and have often predicted the eventual nominees (though not in recent history, especially in Iowa). One town in New Hampshire, Dixville Notch, casts votes at midnight, preceding any other locality in the state. The results are broadcast throughout following day as the rest of New Hampshire heads to the polls—a measure that may **sway undecided voters** and, in many ways, reflects how Iowa and New Hampshire establish trends for the remaining 48 votes.

A win in either state gives presidential candidates an air of inevitability to which some voters respond. John Kerry won Iowa in 2004, for example, and proceeded to supplant the early Democratic favorite, Howard **Dean**. And in 2008, Barack Obama surpassed party-favorite Hillary Clinton for the Democratic nomination. Some political analysts demarcate his stunning victory in Iowa as the beginning of an historic upset. The extent to which primary votes in Iowa and New Hampshire actually alter public opinion is not fully known. Some say they're indicative of national moods. Other say they're only as influential as the media permit them to be.

Generally, primary voters come from the extremes of the parties: leftist Democrats and right-wing Republicans. Regardless, **candidates spend an absurd amount of time handshaking and baby-kissing in Manchester and the Quad Cities.** As a matter of principle, **the fact that so much special attention is heaped on voters in these two states is rather problematic—if not outright un-democratic.**

It might be different if say, Texas and New York held the first-in-the-nation primaries. These two states—one solidly conservative, the other generally liberal—are large, both in geographic area and population. They are diverse in ethnic makeup, industrial focus, and land usage. They are home to some very, very rich people, and some very, very poor ones. Most important of all, they contain both rural and densely urban communities, and the vastly disparate political inclinations such environments foster.

By contrast, **Iowa and New Hampshire are very white. Their disparities in income and education are not reflective of the national norms. The largest cities are overgrown small towns. Simply put, they do not reflect the broader electorate. If not for their position on the calendar, they wouldn't be the states dictating presidential nominees to the rest of the country.** (In the case of Iowa, the caucus date is the result of a hotel scheduling snafu in 1972.)

But instead of substituting New Hampshire and Iowa with a Texas and New York (or a Georgia and Minnesota, or a Florida and Michigan), **let's consider the obvious**

alternative: a national primary, conducted on a single day. It's a very simple proposal. Registered party members in a given state would pick the candidate they like best. The candidate with the most support would win that state's primary and take home the concomitant number of Electoral College votes, à la the general election. The person who acquires a majority of electoral votes goes onto the general election as the nominee. End of story.

Not only would **this eliminate the undue influence given to voters in New Hampshire and Iowa, it would shorten the primaries season by months. Politicians wouldn't be able to foment their bases with untenable proposals, only to do a tap dance back to the center in time for the general election. Candidates also wouldn't have time to visit every county in two states. That would mean they'd have to tailor their message to the areas where the broad swaths of their likely supporters actually live—whether in the suburbs and exurbs, or in America's major cities. They'd essentially have to be far more honest about who they are with the American people, far earlier in the process. That might be bad for the talking heads on cable news. But it'd be good news for democracy.**



➤ *Pro Evidence: One-day primary is better, more democratic*

(Hemlata Vasavada, master's in philosophy from the University of Jodhpur, "The many advantages of a national Super Tuesday," *Seattle Times*, <http://www.seattletimes.com/opinion/the-many-advantages-of-a-national-super-tuesday/>, March 14 2012)

FOR a country that prides itself in counting all votes, **the selection of presidential candidates is not a very democratic process. The present schedule for primaries or caucuses is undemocratic since voters from some states have an unfair advantage over others in choosing the party candidate. Almost two years before the 2012 presidential election, prospective candidates made their pilgrimages to Iowa and New Hampshire. Why is it so important to impress the electorate in just these two states? Shouldn't all 50 states get equal representation in deciding on a presidential candidate? In 2008, by the time the primaries and caucuses came to Washington state, the candidate for the Republican Party was already selected, and the Democratic Party voters were left with two choices. During that same election year, when some states held their primaries before Feb. 5 so they could have a say in choosing their candidate, the national political parties decided to remove their delegates.** Former Sen. William Brock of Tennessee expressed the problem: "Today, too many people in too many states have no voice in the election of our major party nominees. For them the nominations are over before they have begun." This selection process has caused friction among states as they race to move their primary dates forward. It has also exacerbated rivalry among the candidates of the same party. Over the years, there have been several proposals to reform this process; among them — shortening the primary season, grouping primaries by the size of the states (with the smallest states first, so they can have equal representation), a rotating regional primary system, an interregional primary plan, and a national primary system. Of all the options, party **primaries held nationwide on one Super Tuesday** a few months before the party conventions **would have several advantages over the present system. It would shorten the campaign period, maintain civility among candidates of the same party, and give all 50 states a chance to elect a nominee. The main objection to the same-day-primary elections is that the candidates wouldn't be able to spend time in each state** to meet the public and present their ideas. This was probably true in the last century, **but now candidates have greater visibility in the remotest corner of the country via television and the Internet. The candidates could still visit Iowa and New Hampshire along with the rest of the 48 states. They could still have televised debates and town-hall meetings for several months before the "One Day National Primary."** If a national primary system is instated, candidates could declare their intent to run in January (not any earlier) of the election year, campaign until July for primary elections, and then concentrate on the general election in November. **By limiting the campaigning to less than a year, many elected officials running for president would continue to work at the jobs they were elected to do instead of wooing votes.** While elections cycles in other countries last six months or a year, in the United States of America, it starts as soon as the presidential elections are over. **Part of the reason for such a lengthy election period is the presidential primaries. Since they are staggered, the debates, the polling and the media coverage go on ad nauseam. A national Super Tuesday will save money, increase government efficiency and save us from election fatigue.**

➤ *Pro Evidence: One-day primary is better, more democratic*

(David A. Andelman, editor-in-chief of *World Policy Journal* & member of the Council on Foreign Relations, "It Really Is Time For A National Primary," *Forbes*, http://www.forbes.com/2008/01/03/primaries-presidential-politics-oped-cx_daa_0103primaries.html, Jan 3 2008)

With Iowans caucusing and New Hampshire voters getting set to cast their ballots five days from now in their quadrennial rites of passage, the question deserves to be raised in earnest—**why do we let these two small rump states, largely white and Protestant, set the agenda for our vast, heterogeneous population in America?** While there's still "Super Tuesday" (this year, dubbed "Super Duper Tuesday") yet to come, **the winners in these first two desperately fought contests do set the tone for the ever-broadening votes that will follow.** So why do we allow this—especially when there is a clearly obvious solution? **We need a national primary in America.** Certainly, it's not a novel idea. Indeed, it was first proposed in 1911 in a bill introduced in Congress that was backed by President Woodrow Wilson—a sure kiss of death, since, four years later, it died in committee after a Senator concluded that a constitutional amendment would be necessary. That's by no means clear at all. Indeed, a host of such reform proposals have been on the agenda of political parties and various elected bodies through the years. One such proposal, known variously as the American Plan or California Plan, starts with smaller state primaries and moves up to larger ones in a succession of 10 or 12 steps, with each round chosen at random. One derivation was suggested by a group assembled by the Republican National Committee in 2000, recommending four primaries, with states grouped by size, starting with the smallest first. The Republican National Convention rejected the idea. Other sorts of regional plans, favored by the National Association of Secretaries of State, also



have stalled, for a host of reasons. So now we come to the idea of a true national primary. Why not? Certainly, **such a system has worked effectively in other nations around the world**—nations that stage such ballots on a regular basis. During the seven years I spent in France, every election was a national one—oh, and they generally took place on a Sunday, when no one would have any reasonable excuse not to go to the polls. How would this work here? The idea would be to have a national primary day—the type of balloting to be decided by each state (caucus, primary balloting, town hall, for that matter) that is best suited to its citizens and their traditions. All candidates could enter, just as they do now. If one candidate achieved an absolute majority of votes in that state in the first round, he or she would receive that state's delegates to the national convention. If not, there would be a run-off (again on a fixed date) three weeks later of the top two in each state in each party. Conventions would be held as usual in August, and the general election in November. So let's examine at least some of the pros and cons of such a single national primary.

First, the pros. **We are a vast nation, and every voter deserves a chance to express his or her opinion on as many potential presidential candidates as possible, without an agenda being frozen in place by major, early victories in states that are only vaguely representative of the broad mass of the American people.** The way things are structured **today, many candidates are forced out** after losses in the small, earlier primaries, **as their war chests dry up before they can ever reach the larger states** on Super Duper Tuesday. **These candidates might indeed be quite appealing to the larger, more urbanized states** on both coasts, **where the vast bulk of the American electorate votes**. There are certainly **cons**, of course. These **include cost**—some candidates with few resources would be unable to stage a truly national media campaign and would be unable to jet around to all the key states. **Still, such candidates could target their spending on a few individual states and hope to win some delegates to take to the national conventions. In that case, the conventions might even prove meaningful again.**

➤ *Pro Evidence: SQ disenfranchises later voters, hurts turnout*

(Ileana Wachtel, national press secretary for Americans Elect, "We Need to Re-imagine Our Democracy," *US News & World Report*, <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/we-need-to-re-imagine-our-democracy>, March 9 2012)

A same-day national primary would empower all voters equally and restore meaning to the principle of "one person, one vote." Under the current system, millions of Americans in later-voting states (including many of the largest, such as California, Texas, and New York) **are effectively disenfranchised by a process that winnows the field before they can cast their ballots.** You need look no further than the current presidential campaign and its endless barrage of attack ads to see the need to reform the current, dysfunctional system. Independent groups and super PACs on both sides have poured at least \$70.3 million into a barrage of ads, most of them negative. The Democratic incumbent and his Republican challengers have pulled in another \$330 million and promise to raise hundreds of millions more. **Amid this avalanche of fundraising and spending, however, voter enthusiasm is tepid and turnout is lagging** behind 2008.

With that backdrop, many candidates would embrace **a national primary, which would level the playing field and upend the current system, which favors establishment candidates who have more money, bigger campaign operations, and Rolodexes filled with party bigwigs.** In order to change the way we govern, we first need to re-imagine our democracy and change the way we elect our leaders. A national primary might just be the way to get there.

➤ *Pro Evidence: One-day primary is more representative, increases turnout*

(Rhodes Cook, senior political writer for *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report* & contributing editor for *Public Perspective*, "The Presidential Nominating Process: A Place for Us?," Rowman & Littlefield, Google Books, 2004)

Clearly, **a national primary would eliminate concerns over front-loading and the advantage held by early-voting states** such as Iowa and New Hampshire. **It would make all votes meaningful since they would be cast concurrently and tallied on a national basis. And it would likely increase voter participation, since interest would be focused on a single event in which the whole country could participate, just like the November general election.**



Big States/Urban Areas vs. Small States/Rural Areas

On the flip side, cons can claim that a one-day national primary would unfairly prioritize voters in large, populous states over those in more rural, sparsely-populated areas.

If the entire nation voted on the same day, candidates would be strongly incentivized to focus their efforts primarily on the parts of the country where the greatest numbers of voters reside—especially those voters who belong to the candidate’s own political party. Why spend limited time and money speaking to a crowd of 30 in Waterloo, IA if you could instead spend it speaking to a crowd of 3,000 in New York City? The math would simply demand that candidates prioritize the nation’s urban centers over rural county fairs and small-town community breakfasts.

According to the con, this threatens democratic representation. Although the status quo may give some degree of undue influence to residents of certain less-populated states, it is certainly not so extreme that urban dwellers are denied candidates’ attentions. Just because the first few months of the campaign are spent in Iowa does not mean that the candidates will never get around to holding rallies in Dallas or LA or Chicago. However, eliminating the status quo primary system may very well eliminate candidates’ incentive to ever set foot in a small town in a “flyover state.”

For example, the population of the entire state of Wyoming is about 580,000. In contrast, New York City has more than 8.4 million residents. In pure utilitarian terms, it would make little sense for any politician to spend time and money meeting citizens across Wyoming’s 97,000 square miles, when they could instead reach >14x more voters within the 304 square miles that make up the NYC metro area.

So, for its opponents, the one-day national primary plan risks the creation of a system where only residents of major cities ever receive any facetime with candidates, while the [~20% of the country](#) that lives in rural areas would be totally forgotten about.

➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary= rural states ignored*

(Barbara Norrander, professor of government and public policy at the University of Arizona, “The Imperfect Primary: Oddities, Biases, and Strengths of U.S. Presidential Nomination Politics,” Routledge, Google Books, Feb 11 2015)

Arguments against a national primary focus on the cost of running a national campaign and the inability of lesser-known candidates to compete. Even a candidate such as Barack **Obama needed a sequential scheduling of multiple**



primary elections to gain the credibility to win the nomination. As he won more states, Obama demonstrated his ability to connect with voters and convinced more of the party's leaders to back him. A single national primary would necessitate campaigns composed of television advertisements and "tarmac campaigning," where candidates fly into several locations on one day making short stops and delivering the same stump speech. The **retail politics** of the small early primaries and caucuses **would be lost.** In a national campaign, **candidates would focus on large states and large urban centers** where more votes could be won. **Smaller and rural states could be ignored.** A single one-day national primary receives no support from political party leaders. Party leaders fear that **a factional candidate could win a national primary in which four, five, or six candidates competed. The winning candidate might be the preferred choice of 30 percent of the primary voters, but the other 70 percent might adamantly oppose** this candidate. The national primary is viewed as too radical by party leaders who still see value in the national conventions for unifying the party. **Moreover, a national primary would further separate candidates from the party.** Some fear that a national primary would bring an end to the parties, relegating parties solely to the role of being vehicles for individual candidates to claim a label.

Influence of Money, Media, & Elite Status

Another strong con argument for this topic is that, in a one-day national primary, would-be candidates would have to campaign in every area of the nation simultaneously. This means big ad buys on national broadcasts, lots of cross-country flights, and a process that is even more ludicrously costly than the current system. Some fear this would make it nearly impossible for less-established candidates to compete fairly alongside well-known, mega-rich elites.

Obviously, it isn't as though the present system is extremely conducive to successful campaigning on the part of "average Joes" (and Janes)—when was the last time someone who wasn't already a celebrity or relatively high-ranking politician stood a snowball's chance of receiving a major party's nomination? This line of argument, therefore, is not that truly *anyone* can become president in the status quo, but rather that a one-day primary would *further* cement the dominance of wealthy and well-connected candidates, and thereby make the system less representative.

For example, when Barack Obama received the Democratic nomination in 2008, his rise to the top was somewhat of a surprise. Most people thought Hillary Clinton would easily be the nominee that year. As the spouse of a former president and an active figure in American political life for many years, she went into the 2008 election cycle with the support of most of the DNC's leadership and a much larger donor base than what was available to Obama. But, despite facing a relative disadvantage, Obama wasn't just "some guy." He was a sitting Illinois State Senator and candidate for the U.S. Senate at the time, and had given a highly-lauded and buzz-generating address at the 2004 Democratic Convention that [launched his rise to prominence](#). In other words, it's only in comparison to someone like Hillary Clinton that 2008-era Barack Obama could have been characterized as "the little guy" or a "political outsider." That is the



context in which you should think about the debate over whether a one-day primary would unfairly suppress “outsider” campaigns: under the current system, it is possible for a *less-famous* politician to rise above an extremely famous politician. Would that still be true if we had a one-day national primary?

In the status quo, someone who plans to run for president would start out by heading to Iowa. He or she would appear at town halls, walk in community parades, and eat corndogs for the news cameras at county fairs. Although certainly not free, this type of campaigning—sometimes called “[retail politics](#)”—is extremely low-cost in comparison to the astronomical cost of running a nationwide presidential campaign like during the general election. This makes the first step¹⁰ affordable to even little-known or “dark horse” candidates. The amount of fundraising they would need to do to facilitate their efforts in Iowa is relatively modest and can be done without having major backers within the party elite or large corporations.

As we’ve already touched on, though, candidates are expected to use Iowa (and other early primaries) to catapult their campaigns into the spotlight and begin raking in enough media attention and donations to support a national strategy that grows ever more demanding and expensive. You might be able to win the Iowa Caucus by shaking enough hands and kissing enough babies, but expanding your efforts to reach the entire country takes a sophisticated strategy, a huge campaign staff infrastructure, and millions upon millions of dollars. Because Iowa votes first, and is therefore watched by the rest of the country, a big win there can generate the momentum needed help a “small” candidate fundraise, grow his/her campaign, and overtake the “big” candidate. If everyone voted on the same day, however, it’s likely that these “small” candidates would be crushed by the massive resource advantage of the “big guys” before the first round of votes were ever tallied.

➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary too expensive, crushes small campaigns*

(Beth Chapman, Alabama secretary of state & president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, “A National Primary Wouldn’t Work,” US News & World Report, <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/a-national-primary-wouldnt-work>, March 9 2012)

Americans want and deserve a more rational system for selecting our president, **but a national primary with every state participating on the same day is a bad idea.** Proponents like to argue that under this scenario, more voters would have a chance to participate in the process, and all states would have the opportunity to be relevant to the selection of presidential nominees. However, a national primary day would present several significant problems. First, **a national primary would give a huge advantage to better-known, better-funded candidates since only they would be able to finance the expensive advertising and large campaign operation needed to run a national “get out the vote” effort in all states. Lesser-known candidates without extensive campaign operations would not have an opportunity to reach out**

¹⁰ Campaigning in Iowa



to voters in retail-style fashion and build support. Moreover, densely populated states with higher delegate counts **would become the dominant focus of the campaigns** and the media. In addition, political **parties would have little control over the selection of their eventual nominee, and state party leaders would no longer have the flexibility to set their primary or caucus dates according to state-specific considerations**, such as redistricting issues, state holidays, or other state and local elections. If you want evidence of why a national primary won't work, **just take a look at 2008**. At least **24 states held a primary or caucus on February 5, resulting in what was essentially a de facto national primary**. Super Tuesday became Tsunami Tuesday. **The situation was so bad for overwhelmed campaigns, party leaders, and election officials that the two parties worked together to ensure their rules for 2012 would help avoid a repeat.**

- *Con Evidence: One-day primary too expensive, SQ leads to better retail politics & stronger nominees*
(Terry Shumaker, former United States ambassador & member of the Democratic National Committee Primary Calendar Commission, "Tough Primary Battles Forge More Resilient Nominees," US News & World Report, <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/tough-primary-battles-forge-more-resilient-nominees>, March 9 2012)

I agree with former first lady Barbara Bush that we are probably witnessing the worst presidential primary campaign ever, but that is no reason to embrace a national primary. **Our traditional caucus/primary process is often messy and unpredictable, but there is no question it produces stronger nominees.** Almost 200 years ago, **Andrew Jackson engineered the first national convention to take selection of nominees away from Washington insiders. A national primary would give it back to them, weakening the role of ordinary voters and the states.**

A national primary, no matter how structured or scheduled, would kill the American dream that any boy or girl can grow up to be president. Only well-known, wealthy candidates would ever get on the ballot, dooming us to a never-ending line of anointed nominees. A primary calendar spanning months gives lesser-known, underfunded candidates a chance to grow their campaigns and hone their messages. As Jimmy Carter proved, one can start in a couple of states and end up in the White House. In the current process, the presidential aspirants must interact with voters and elected officials from coast to coast, learning invaluable things about our country and themselves.

The Iowa and New Hampshire political landscapes are littered with the wreckage of candidates past who looked great on paper but were never able to get off the ground (John Glenn in 1984, Phil Gram in 1996, and Fred Thompson in 2008). **Without the winnowing process of the early states followed by the later, delegate-rich big state contests, a party could easily select a nominee based on name recognition, good looks, and great ads who then flops on the national stage in the general election. With a national primary, a lesser-known candidate with a powerful message like anti-Vietnam War crusader Gene McCarthy, who upended a sitting President Lyndon Johnson in 1968, would simply not be possible.**

A national primary would render minority voters, interest groups, and regional concerns less important while elevating the status of political consultants, advertising gurus, and super PACs. Does a tarmac rally in Atlanta look any different from one in Seattle? **Forget about candidates actually meeting voters** in diners or factories, as big events are all you would see. President Clinton is fond of saying that the New Hampshire primary is less important for what the voters learn from the candidates than for what the candidates learn from the voters. He will be the first to tell you that **a long, tough primary battle forges a better, more resilient nominee, and made him a better president.** Isn't that what this all about?



➤ *Con Evidence: Only super-rich could win one-day primary*

(Rich Galen, former press secretary to Dan Quayle & communications director to Newt Gingrich and partner with the International Republican Institute, Legacy International, and the ONE Campaign, "Balance Point," Mullings, <http://www.mullings.com/02-08-16.htm>, Feb 8 2016)

But, in answer to the question you are asking this morning at the Keurig machine: **Should we just have a one-day 50-state primary** so that these tiny, unrepresentative, self-important states don't control the entire flow of the primary season? **No, would be the answer** to that. **If there were a one-day national primary only the Clintons, the Trumps, the Bloomburghs and others of that level of wealth and influence could even think about running**, much less put together a national operation to execute it. **For** all of the other faults of **the Iowa**, New Hampshire, South Carolina, Nevada **start, you don't have to have \$100 million in the bank just to get a seat at the table. Jimmy Carter was a sitting Governor, but not rich, when he ran in 1976. Bill Clinton really was poor when he ran for President in 1992. The New York Times reported that Clinton's annual salary as Governor of Arkansas was \$35,000** - about six minutes of one of Hillary's more recent speeches.

➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary kills retail politics, ensures richest candidates win*

(Fix The Primaries, bipartisan advocacy group dedicated to primary reform, "The One Day National Primary," <http://fixtheprimaries.com/solutions/oneday/>, no publication date provided, accessed May 3 2016)

Often pundits return to the simple solution of holding a nationwide primary on a single day, rather than proceeding state by state.
Discussion

Though **a one day national primary** would remove difference between states and force candidates to campaign in more geographically diverse areas prior to the election, it **would remove all the advantages associated with a graduated nomination schedule. Retail politicking that can allow less well funded candidates to get their messages out early and attract attention would all but be wiped out under this system. A national primary would favor the candidates with the largest war chests, and be fought almost exclusively by television and radio advertising.** This is, of course, conjecture only at this point, but it cannot be denied **that reducing the election to a single flash point aids front runners and big spenders and denies other candidates the process through which to build momentum.**

➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary= money & fame win*

(Danielle Kurtzleben, political reporter, "No Way To Pick A President? Here Are 6 Other Ways To Do It," NPR, <http://www.npr.org/2016/01/26/463870736/no-way-to-pick-a-president-here-are-6-other-ways-to-do-it>, Jan 26 2016)

Cons

It would make money and name recognition even more important than they already are. Instead of having to focus early on buying ads in Iowa (or whichever state might otherwise go first), **a candidate would have a whole nation of media markets to try to hit. That means a less well funded candidate who currently can stand a chance in the small early states** right now **would be at a huge disadvantage.**

It could also disadvantage a grass-roots-fueled candidate like Bernie Sanders. The Vermont independent leads or is closely matched with former Secretary of State Hillary Clinton in the two early states of Iowa and New Hampshire this year, but he trails by double digits in most national polls.

In addition, this kind of plan could mean that candidates would focus only on the highest-population states, leaving smaller and largely rural states without many cities — and therefore fewer delegates — all but **abandoned**. That's what Alabama's then-Secretary of State Beth Chapman wrote at U.S. News in 2012.



➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary= too much influence from media & money*

(Morton Blackwell, Virginia Republican National Committeeman, "Let's Stop the Trend toward a National Presidential Primary," RedState Member Diary, http://www.redstate.com/diary/Morton_C_Blackwell/2013/08/02/lets-stop-the-trend-toward-a-national-presidential-primary/, Aug 2 2013)

For decades, Republican leaders watched as state after state moved their presidential primaries earlier and earlier. We moved closer and closer each election cycle to what amounted to a "national primary," where a majority of convention delegates would be elected on a single day or within a period of a very few days. **There was almost unanimous agreement that a national primary is a bad idea. Here are some of the reasons** why almost all party leaders agreed that something had to be done to stop the movement toward a national primary:

1. The selection and binding of most national convention delegates in a very short period of time would give a huge advantage to a very wealthy candidate. There would not be time for anyone who started without such wealth to build a base of supporters by proving himself or herself to be an excellent candidate early in the presidential nomination season and, over time, building a winning grassroots campaign.

2. The front-loading of our delegate selection would give the major liberal media an opportunity to build up quickly someone they wanted our party to nominate. The liberal media can, in a very short time, generate favorable coverage and national celebrity for any Republican candidate they choose. They have done this before and might do it again. It takes longer for grassroots Republicans to unite behind their choice of candidates.

3. There should be a sufficiently long period in the nomination contest to test every potential nominee in a number of successive contests in a wide variety of states and circumstances. Without such a testing period, one lucky break or one early mistake could result in our nominating someone due to a fluke.

➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary disadvantages lesser-known candidates*

(James Q. Wilson, former Shattuck Professor of Government at Harvard University, chairman of the Council of Academic Advisors of the American Enterprise Institute, member of the President's Foreign Intelligence Advisory Board & Director of Joint Center for Urban Studies at Harvard-MIT, "American Government: Brief Version," Cengage Learning, Google Books, Jan 2011)

Each state decides in conjunction with the national party when its primary or caucus will take place, and **the federal system of government designed by the Framers did not guarantee that all states would be treated equally at all times. A national primary would favor candidates with high name recognition and funding to further that recognition and would severely disadvantage lesser-known candidates** within the party. Even though the general election takes place on one day, voter turnout in the United States still is lower than in other advanced industrialized democracies, which suggests that other factors influence who participates.



On the other hand, the pro can respond that the status quo does not actually offer substantial advantages in terms of mitigating the role of preexisting money and influence over the primary process. They might further claim that the advantages of a one-day primary would resolve this issue, because voters would become more engaged, and thus more able to educate themselves on the issues and see through meaningless charades. Finally, the internet and television could be used to reduce the cost and travel burdens of the early campaign process.

➤ *Pro Evidence: A2 "one-day primaries favor money/fame"*

(Bill Feldman, Media/Public Relations consultant, "Time for a National Primary Day in September," *Huffington Post*, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/bill-feldman/primary-elections_b_2219848.html, Jan 30 2013)

Now that the presidential election is behind us, we can set aside the quadrennial handwringing over the electoral college and address **the** real problem: a **nominating process** that **rewards individuals who can spend two years or more** running around Iowa and New Hampshire **pandering to two of the least representative states** in the U.S., **and leaves most Americans disenfranchised and alienated.** We have grown so accustomed to this system that we forget just how irrational it is. And because it has become ingrained, we also forget that it evolved entirely accidentally. It is time to start over. A little historical perspective: For most of the first 150 years or so of American life, primaries were not a major factor in the selection of a major party nominee. That was the job of national conventions. As a handful of states began holding primaries instead of state conventions, the process changed somewhat, but the schedule of the primaries remained early in the year so that they could be concluded before the conventions. As more states scheduled primaries, the process became more attenuated, but still scheduled early in the year to precede the nominating conventions. But the conventions have become archaic and useless, and the string of primary (and caucus) process that precedes them unnecessarily early and absurdly attenuated. What we are left with is **a two-year long process** that **invites the participation of marginal candidates along with those who can spend two years running for president. Then it winnows them out in a way that does three things, all of them bad: It prevents the majority of Americans from having a real voice** in the selection of their party's nominee, it **encourages marginal and extreme candidates to spend an eternity in Iowa and NH hoping that an early win will catapult them into the first tier, and it often produces a candidate that is unrepresentative of his/her party. The solution is to** eliminate the conventions and **schedule a nationwide primary** on the first Tuesday after Labor Day. **This will have the benefit of** shortening campaigns, **enfranchising all Americans** in selecting their party's nominee, **and prevent marginal candidates** like Michelle Bachmann and Herman Cain **from becoming favor-of-the-month distractions from the serious business of choosing a president. Criticism of a national primary has always been that it favors candidates with enough money and recognition to run a national campaign, but why is this bad? We do need candidates with national stature, and do not benefit from flirtations with novelties** or candidates with only regional appeal. Moreover, many pundits noted this year that **with the Internet and 24/7 news cycle, candidates were in effect running national campaigns** and were spending less time doing retail politics in the snows of New Hampshire and Iowa and more time fund raising in Hollywood, Palm Beach and elsewhere. **Another criticism is that such a primary would not produce a nominee with a majority of votes. So what? The majority produced by the current system is a contrivance. Who believes** Mitt Romney would have won a majority **against a full slate of GOP candidates had everyone been able to vote at once. His majority was produced** as the combination of the winner-take-all delegate process and **[by] the inability of other candidates to stay in the race after only a handful of primaries.** The process is beyond tinkering. It needs wholesale renewal. **We are one nation and we need to select our candidates as one,** closer in time to the general election. **This will not only produce better candidates, but it will** reduce the "buyer's remorse" that the current system seems to frequently generate. It may also **shorten the process and** perhaps even **trim** some of **its** hideous **expense.**



- *Pro Evidence: Media coverage & increased voter engagement solves risks of money/fame*
(Andrea Cooper, award-winning journalist, "The case for a national primary," *Christian Science Monitor*, <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2008/0211/p09s02-coop.html>, Feb 11 2008)\

There's no question that **having a national primary would pose challenges. Candidates wouldn't have the money to travel to every state or run omnipresent television ads. So what? We can read what they have to say in newspapers and on the Web. We can watch or hear them in broadcast interviews and debates** Maybe we could even set a cap on how much each candidate can spend, so the contest is more about ideas and less about fundraising. As long as we're talking change, I know I'm not the only American who has trouble grasping why delegates do the electing for us. Here's a crazy idea: What if we all just cast our primary votes for a presidential nominee on one day, counted them, and let the winners from each party compete in the general election? **Some opponents to a national primary say it would give too much advantage to well-known candidates.** It's possible that's true. **But as is, plenty of civic-minded people tune out the election,** and not just **because** of the endless months of campaigning and political reporting. **If you live in one of the later-voting states and don't have the means to send big bucks to a candidate, there's not much reason to pay close attention. And that's wrong.** In North Carolina, I'm hearing some people talk with a bit of wistful hopefulness that maybe their primary votes might mean something this year. One North Carolina newspaper devoted a front page story to the idea that the state's voters may influence the nominations for the first time in 20 years. But our votes for a presidential nominee – **each American's vote for president – should always matter. The decision is too important not to have every voter involved who wants to be, and every vote really count.**

Factional Coordination & Voter Learning

Another strong con argument can be found in a relatively new piece of academic research, conducted collaboratively by several economists and political scientists. Their study concluded that the current system is superior to a one-day national primary system due to the tensions between two competing electoral imperatives: the need for factional coordination, and the importance of voter learning.

The term "**factional coordination**" refers to a behavior we've already touched on: individuals with similar beliefs/priorities have an incentive to work together to support a single candidate, rather than splitting their votes among multiple candidates and potentially being drowned out by the votes of a larger coalition. Factional coordination is a foundational principle of democratic systems; it's one of the main reasons political parties exist in the first place. Even within a particular party, such as during a primary race, there tend to be ideological factions that must negotiate amongst themselves.

For example, the modern Republican Party is made up partially of fiscal conservatives/people who prioritize economic freedom, and partially of social conservatives/people who want to preserve what they see as traditional social values (amongst others). Some people might be both fiscal and social conservatives, but others are not. These people choose to align themselves together in the general election for the purpose of giving both groups more influence. In the primary, however, they might have very different notions of which candidate would be the ideal nominee for their party.



“[Voter learning](#)” is the process by which individual voters familiarize themselves with the various available candidates, evaluate their suitability for the nomination, and determine who they will support. For truly informed voters, this is a multi-step process: one must determine not only which candidate one most agrees with on policy proposals, but also the quality of that candidate’s legislative record, their job qualifications and personal history, the probability that they could realistically win an election, etc. As such, a voter usually needs multiple exposures to a candidate and time to reflect before coming to the optimal selection of whom to support.

Factional coordination and voter learning intersect in a couple of ways. First, each cooperating group (“faction”) must agree on which candidate to rally around. However, it is in their best interest to reach this decision only after a substantial amount of voter learning has already had the opportunity to take place. If the faction chooses too early, they may eliminate the best candidate without ever seriously considering him or her, just because he or she has not yet had time to become well known. If they delay too long, however, their opposition may gain the upper hand by “circling the wagons” first and solidifying a decisive overall lead while everyone else is still deliberating.

Think of it like this: if you’re trying to choose someone to ask to be your date for an upcoming dance, you probably shouldn’t just ask the first person you see without considering whether or not someone else might be a better choice. But, at the same time, you also don’t want to agonize over the choice for so long that, by the time you start asking, everyone you like has already agreed to go with someone else.

Similarly, think about the 2016 Republican presidential primary so far. The race started with [roughly 800 candidates](#) on the ballot. Numerous “sub-factions” of the GOP were represented, from people like Mike Huckabee (socially conservative, Evangelical voters) to Rand Paul (more on the libertarian side) available to choose from. When, for example, Evangelical voters had to evaluate who to support, they had several options: [Huckabee](#), [Rick Santorum](#), [Ted Cruz](#), etc. are all champions of similar values. Just because their beliefs are alike, though, doesn’t necessarily mean they would all make equally strong candidates.

Remember, factions don’t simply pick a candidate on the basis of ideological alignment alone, they must also consider the more pragmatic question of electability. Even if someone agrees with you on every important issue, if they stand zero chance of actually winning, you might be better off throwing your support behind someone who with a more realistic shot. If a faction chooses their candidate too early in the process, they might wind up committing themselves to



someone with a terrible flaw they didn't discover in time, or dismissing someone who would have been a fantastic contender.

Avoiding these mistakes, and therefore creating a successful coordination effort, is most possible when voters have a chance to observe a candidate's strengths and weaknesses over an extended period of time, in multiple situations, and against a variety of circumstances. This process also provides time for in-depth vetting by supporters and opponents alike, decreasing the chances of voters learning something earth-shattering about a candidate after it is too late. The extended primary system, according to the research, is therefore the best method for maximizing the likelihood that a party will choose from the available candidates to eventually nominate what political scientists call the [Condorcet winner](#)—the candidate that would prevail in a head-to-head race against any of the others.

Here is a fun historical example: leading up to the 2008 Democratic presidential primary, Iowa polls indicated either John Edwards as the frontrunner with Hillary Clinton as a close second, or vice versa, or a dead tie between the two. Edwards wound up placing 2nd, behind Obama and ahead of 3rd-place Clinton, in the Iowa caucuses. As the campaign unfolded, Obama began generating unanticipated momentum, pulling ahead of both Clinton and Edwards. After only a handful of primaries (and before "[Super Tuesday](#)"), and following a 3rd place finish in his own home state of South Carolina, Edwards had fallen far enough behind that he chose to end his campaign. There are three useful things this example can illustrate.

First, that momentum (especially for a lesser-known candidate) is impacted by primary results and ongoing campaign activities—the candidate with the momentum advantage before Iowa does *not* necessarily keep that advantage and become the nominee, if another candidate is able to capture the spotlight. Often, these surges take place during the windows between the various primary days, when the public and the news media turn their attention to unpacking the results of the race(s) so far. Changes in momentum can also, as we see from Edwards, become so severe as to cost the candidate a loss even in areas thought to be a sure-thing.

Second, we can see from Edwards how attributes beyond political positions can become important voter considerations. In late 2007 and early 2008, [allegations surfaced](#) that Edwards had been carrying on an extramarital affair, fathering a child with woman other than his wife, who happened to have been battling terminal, incurable cancer. Although Edwards denied the affair until October 2008, and the existence of a child produced by the affair until January 2010, the rumors were nevertheless a [political liability](#) for him that [hurt his chances](#) of receiving the Democratic nomination, and



subsequently likely cost him a predicted role in Obama’s cabinet. In other words, as Democratic voters started to smell a scandal in the air, they began to shift away from Edwards and towards alternate candidates¹¹—a move that turned out to be warranted. Because the eventual disclosure that Edwards had indeed been unfaithful to his dying wife—which was revealed, remember, a month before the general election—[could have theoretically cost the Democrats the White House had they chosen him](#) as their 2008 nominee, we can see why it might be smart for factions to submit candidates to sustained, ongoing public scrutiny before committing their support.

Third, and finally, the 2008 Democratic primary saga offers a lesson in how changing opinions on one candidate also directly impact the electoral chances of the other candidates. Once John Edwards left the race, most of his supporters [shifted their allegiance to Obama](#), which was important to securing his lead over Hillary Clinton. Had Edwards remained in the race longer, it is possible that Clinton would have pulled ahead, instead.

So, returning to the conclusion reached by the study we’ve been discussing, a well-designed primary system must take into account the competing imperatives of rallying around a candidate fairly rapidly (coordination), while simultaneously making sure that the choice to support a candidate is made only after due diligence (learning).

A one-day national primary, they conclude, would undermine voter learning, by forcing all voters to make their final selections early and simultaneously, without the benefit of an extended trial period through which to test a candidate’s strength.

For example, had the United States used a one-day national primary in 2008, the Democrats may well have nominated John Edwards, which they would have come to regret fiercely once damaging information about his character was released. Because the candidates were all exposed to an extended trial period, however, where their performances were compared to each other and to their own histories, the Democrats instead successfully nominated a candidate that would go on to win 2 presidential elections. Whether or not you are a fan of Obama, it is inarguable that this represents a dramatically preferable outcome from the perspective of Democratic leaders.

¹¹ Certainly, the affair rumors were not the sole, or even the primary, cause of Edwards’ loss to Obama. Much of the turn in public opinion had to do with Obama’s attractive attributes, rather than Edwards’ personal liabilities. However, the distrust that began to circle around Edwards certainly did play some role in his demise, and offers a helpful illustration of the concepts we’re discussing here.



So, in summary, the con can argue that the current system is actually a more reliable way of ensuring parties choose the strongest option out of their available nominees, rather than rashly endorsing a low-quality candidate because of incomplete information.

The scholarly article I mentioned offers useful evidentiary support here, because its authors actually conducted a comparative experiment, and conclude that the status quo sequential primary system leads to significantly better outcomes than one-day national primary race.

➤ *Con Evidence: SQ is better for learning & coordination than one-day primary*

(George Deltas [Professor of Economics and Associate Head in the Department of Economics at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign], Helios Herrera [associate professor in the Department of Applied Economics of HEC Montreal, Canada], & Mattias Polborn [s Professor of Economics and Political Science at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign], "Why a move to a simultaneous Presidential Primary system might be counter-productive," article based on the forthcoming paper 'Learning and Coordination in the Presidential Primary System' in the Review of Economic Studies, <http://bit.ly/1D99GyQ>, Jul 28 2015)

Despite the current wall-to-wall coverage of the 2016 primary race, the primary elections themselves are not scheduled to begin until February 2016, and will last until June. This drawnout primary cycle gives a great deal of influence to a small number of voters in early primary states, such as Iowa and New Hampshire. George Deltas, Helios Herrera and Mattias Polborn look at proposed alternatives to this system, in the form of a one-day national primary system or one where all states in the Northeast, Midwest, West and South would vote simultaneously. **Using models of voter information**, they argue that a **sequential voting** system **performs much better than a one-day national primary**, but that the parties could improve the system even further by encouraging lagging candidates to drop out more quickly. As the 2016 Presidential primary race heats up, **voters have a large number of potential candidates to choose from**. On the Republican side, there are currently 16 declared candidates, none of whom currently garners more than 20 percent support on the RealClearPolitics Average of Polls. Several of these candidates will not even make it on the ballots of the first caucuses and primaries in Iowa and New Hampshire in January 2016, because weak donor support and polling numbers will have already forced them out by that time. In fact, it is likely that several declared candidates recognize that this will be their ultimate fate, but they are staying in the race in order to gain free media exposure. Still, even after several departures there will be a substantial number of candidates for voters to choose from, **at least for the first primaries**. **At that stage, coordination will be an essential: For example**, as long as Mike **Huckabee**, Ted **Cruz** and Rick **Santorum** all remain in the race, they **will split the support of Evangelical Republicans among each other, and so will be less successful than if there was only one Evangelical candidate behind whom the socially conservative wing of the party would unite**. Similarly, more moderate candidates such as Jeb Bush or Scott Walker are also likely to fish from one pond of voters that faces a similar coordination problem. **While like-minded voters benefit from coordination, which specific candidate that they should coordinate on is a difficult problem. The candidates are still mostly unknown to voters nationwide and their performance in national debates and on the campaign trail should play a major role for voters. Rushed coordination might eliminate early on a candidate who would have been great if he was ever seriously considered. Learning about candidate quality needs time**. In new research, we study **the trade-off between voter coordination and learning about candidate quality**, and how it **is affected by different ways to organize the timing of the Presidential primaries**. In principle, the Presidential primaries do not have to be organized such that Iowa and New Hampshire vote first, followed sequentially by other states. The present system gives a lot of power to very few non-representative voters in those early primary states, and induces candidates to cater to their special interests. **Some** therefore **argue that we should move to a national one-day primary system** where all states vote at the same time. Another system, proposed by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), has four large rounds of voting in which all states in the Northeast, Midwest, West and South would vote simultaneously. **Simultaneous and sequential primaries can clearly yield different results: For example, the momentum from his Iowa victory helped Barack Obama in 2008, particularly because it eliminated the other anti-Hillary Clinton candidate, John Edwards**.



To better understand what the effects of different primary systems might be, we analyzed a model of coordination and learning over time. **Coordination matters if there are two approximately equally strong voter groups (say, conservatives and moderates among Republican primary voters) and candidates in one camp outnumber those in the other — in this case, vote splitting may doom the candidates in the overcrowded camp. Sequential systems temper this effect because some candidates will eventually drop out.** To model learning about voter quality, we assume that **voters** in different states **receive** some **information about candidate quality**, for example **by participating in campaign events** and interacting with the candidates, **or by watching local debates**. **Those who vote later are also indirectly influenced by information in earlier states:** While they cannot directly observe the same information, if a candidate received many votes in an early primary, voters there likely received positive information about him. **This gives rise to a “momentum effect”– winning, especially in early primaries, helps a candidate because it conveys positive information about him to voters in later states.** However, while momentum in our theory is a consequence of rational behavior rather than of an irrational psychological desire to “vote for winners”, it nevertheless can interfere with social learning about candidate quality. Suppose, for example, that voters in New Hampshire receive information about a candidate that is too good relative to the true value. In a sequential primary system, this lucky break has a much larger effect, because it also impresses — incorrectly — many voters in later states who discount their own, countervailing signals. If, instead, all states vote simultaneously, then all signals have the same weight, which statistically leads to a better chance that a high quality candidate wins more votes than a low quality candidate in the same ideological position. **So from a theoretical perspective, the possibility to coordinate favors sequential elections, and the learning effect favors simultaneous elections. To decide which effect is stronger, we estimate the parameters of our model, using data from all post-2000 contested Democratic and Republican Presidential primaries, and find that both key features of the theory — voter learning about candidates, and the need to coordinate — are quantitatively important in these elections. We then simulate the performance of different systems for the parameters found.** Both forms of sequential elections — **the current sequential system**, and the four region NASS proposal — **perform[s]** about equally well, and **a lot better than simultaneous voting in all states.** Another interesting result is that lagging Democratic and Republican candidates in the data dropped out too late from the voters’ point of view. Intuitively, individual candidates do not internalize the negative effects they impose on their party and its voters by continuing their campaign. Parties should therefore nudge candidates into withdrawing earlier than they currently do, for example by awarding the two leading candidates after a certain number of contests (say, 10 states) the same number of additional superdelegates for the convention. This would not distort the contest between the two front-runners, but a potential third candidate has a harder time catching up and might therefore drop out sooner. **These results do not just hold for the baseline parameter values estimated from the historic Democratic and Republican primaries, but are also very robust with respect to reasonable variations** (such as doubling or halving the estimated parameter values). **So**, even though the estimates are based only on three contests each for Democrats and Republicans, **we can be quite confident that the central results are very robust.**

➤ *Con Evidence: SQ more likely to produce Condorcet winner*

(University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, "Sequential voting in presidential primaries best system to winnow candidates," *ScienceDaily*, www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2015/08/150804160928.htm, August 4 2015)

The drawn-out primary cycle, scheduled to begin in February 2016 and lasting until June, affords a great deal of influence to a small number of voters in early primary states, such as Iowa and New Hampshire. But **according to new research from a team of University of Illinois economists, the sequential election format of the primaries is the best mechanism to select the Condorcet winner** -- that is, **the candidate who would prevail in a head-to-head election against any one of the other candidates.** In **the paper**, co-authors George Deltas and Mattias Polborn **studied the trade-offs between voter coordination and candidate quality under different primary election systems.** Using data obtained from Democratic and Republican presidential primaries from 2000-12, Deltas and Polborn ran experiments such as replacing the current primary system with a simultaneous system in which all 50 states voted at once, individually or as blocs. "In principle, presidential primaries do not have to be organized as a sequence of state-by-state elections," said Polborn, also a professor of political science at Illinois. "There have been calls by some pundits to replace the system with a one-day national primary, and there is also a plan by the National Association of Secretaries of State that proposes to hold four regional primaries, one month apart from each other. We wanted to know how these proposed systems would perform in terms of candidate selection." **The findings show that the current sequential election system results in the "highest probability that the Condorcet winner is elected and the highest expected quality of the nominee,"** according to the paper. **The current primary system raises two distinct problems for voters**, Polborn said. "First, many candidates are largely unknown to a national audience, so **voters still need to learn by observing the candidates' performance on the campaign trail** and their performance in national



debates, both of which often play a major role in influencing voters," he said. **Second, different groups of voters -- socially conservative Republicans, for example -- have several candidates to choose from that are ideologically aligned with them. And they will be more successful if they manage to coordinate on one candidate rather than splitting their votes among all of them.** **But which candidate primary voters coordinate on is a difficult issue to decide,** Polborn said. **Rushed voter coordination might eliminate a candidate who otherwise would have been a legitimate contender** if he or she were seriously considered," he said. "In other words, **learning about candidate quality takes time.** **Sequential primaries have likely facilitated the victory of candidates who were not the frontrunner at the beginning of the primary season.** Polborn cites Barack Obama in 2008 as one such example. **In a simultaneous election with a large set of candidates, the candidate who would come out on top is often not the best one,** Polborn said. **By contrast, sequential elections allow voters to narrow down the field of contenders as a way of avoiding vote-splitting among several similar candidates.** Winning, especially in early primaries, helps a candidate because "it conveys positive information about him to voters in later states," he said. "To use this 'momentum effect,' candidates will spend a lot of time in the coming months trying to persuade voters in Iowa and New Hampshire, even though the number of delegates distributed in these contests is actually very small." Although **sequential elections allow voters to coordinate and thus avoid that a candidate wins just because his ideological opponents split the votes of their supporters among each other,** their disadvantage is that, once coordination has occurred, there's very little chance to correct an error made in early elections, as candidate momentum dominates, Polborn said. "This problem is quite large, as our empirical results show that the probability of the full-information Condorcet winner dropping out after the first few primaries is substantial," he said. "However, **the problem of vote-splitting in a simultaneous primary would be a lot worse than the problem of coordination on the wrong candidate in sequential primaries.**" Polborn points to **the 2010 Illinois Republican primary for governor** as [is] an example of the problem of vote-splitting in a simultaneous election. **There were seven candidates, but only [state senator] Bill Brady came from downstate, while the remaining serious candidates all came from the Chicago area,** he said. **Brady received only 21 percent of the statewide vote and most likely was not the strongest candidate** that Republicans could have nominated, **but won the primary nevertheless because the Chicago-based candidates split the vote** there very evenly. **Brady then went on to lose** what should have been **a very winnable general election for the Republicans.**"

➤ *Con Evidence: Each step of SQ process is valuable to learning & coordination*

(Paul Osnes, "In Defense of the Primary System," *American Thinker*,

http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/04/in_defense_of_the_primary_system.html April 21 2016)

To start off with, he doesn't seem to understand why only two parties can be competitive in a U.S. election. **In a parliamentary democracy, multiple parties can represent pure factions** that run against each other **during the election and then form an alliance** afterward, with power shared based on the election results. Deals are made with one or more parties in an attempt to gain a majority and, with it, control of government. This forces the factions that exist to ultimately come together to form the inevitable binary condition of one alliance in government and the other in opposition. **But we have a unitary executive. Our factions need to battle it out before the election** and then forge an alliance greater than the opponents' before election day or be shut out. That is why we have a "two-party system," and **that is why we have the lengthy, complex, and difficult nomination process** that is unfolding as I write. **In order to pick the candidate who represents the best compromise among the factions that make up a party and who also demonstrates the best chance of winning the general election, we have a lengthy, grueling process, where each of the different types of contests, as well as their sequences, plays a role. Caucus states require a candidate to show organizational skill and the ability to attract depth of support. It's not easy to get someone to trudge through the snow, then sit in a room for hours while not budging as his neighbors try to talk him into switching sides. Placing an early caucus in a small state like Iowa minimizes the otherwise overbearing influence of early money. It allows candidates with small pockets and little name recognition a chance to garner momentum and support for later contests though the application of talent and effort. If caucus states show depth, primary states demonstrate the width of a candidate's support.** Again, **an early primary in a small state like New**



Hampshire can force a candidate to practice retail-level politics. How persuasive is he? **Can she get a message across that gains traction? Eliminate these types and this sequence of contests for a one-day national primary, and the only way to win will be with establishment money and establishment infrastructure.** As it is, stringing out contests may favor this faction or that, but can the candidate deliver the faction he says he can? **Winner-take-all contests are in place to cull the field, giving a compromise candidate** (who by definition is the second choice of many) **a shot on the last lap by narrowing the competition before all the delegates are selected. Super Tuesday is the first chance to see if the candidate can do everything at once:** money, organization, message, smarts. It's as close to a nationwide test of ability to win as you can see before the general election. And to the Trump supporters out there, let's be clear: winning on a Super Tuesday means you win a majority, not a plurality, of votes, not states. **This system is a race, and like most car races, it starts with a form of knock-out qualifying designed to get the slower cars out of the way so the leaders can go head to head.** I'm trying to argue that **this has value** and normally works OK; **even if my faction is not exactly thrilled with** a McCain or Romney win, it's one I could live with if **that candidate crosses the finish line first.** And I'm old enough to know that Reagan was hardly the first choice of a lot of other factions in the party back in the day. So sometimes I'm left with my second choice. **Whose fault is that if not mine for not burning up some shoe leather for my favorite?**

➤ *Con Evidence: SQ offers better candidate engagement & voter learning*

(John C. Fortier, director of the Bipartisan Policy Center's Democracy Project & principal contributor to the AEI-Brookings Election Reform Project, executive director of the Continuity of Government Commission, project manager of the Transition to Governing Project & former director of the Center for the Study of American Democracy at Kenyon College, "The Current Primary System Promotes Deliberation," US News & World Report, <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/the-current-primary-system-promotes-deliberation>, March 9 2012)

A national presidential primary held on a single day holds much appeal. It would be allow people in all states to participate in the selection of a presidential nominee where now voters in states late in the process are effectively left out. It is also possible that a single day **would draw significant national attention** and increase voter turnout in all states. **But** there are **virtues of our current system that would be lost. The early contests in the small states** of Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina, and Nevada **promote grass-roots politics, candidates meeting ordinary citizens face to face**, and deep immersion in the political culture of those states. **Don't we want our candidates to show that they can succeed at this type of campaigning, not just the mass-media campaign that we see in the general election and would see in a national primary?** And **the current system is also superior to a national primary in that it allows the party out of the White House to get its message out. In most other countries, the out party has an identifiable opposition leader. In America, there is no official out party leader** for most of the four years of a presidential term, **and it is hard for the out party message to compete with the media coverage of a sitting president. A** longer, **drawn-out, state-by-state race** with many debates may annoy some, but it **keeps the potential nominees in the news and allows their messages to be heard. Our current system** seems messy compared to a single-day national primary, but it also **promotes candidate engagement with real people and a longer sustained national look at the candidates. Chaotic perhaps, but ultimately a system that promotes deliberation.**



➤ *Con Evidence: One-day primary hampers coordination, undermines nominee's credibility*

(Emmett H. Buell [prof emeritus of polis sci at Denison University & former director of the Richard G. Lugar Program in Politics & Public Service] & William G. Mayer [prof of polis ci at Northeastern University & Member of the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association], "Enduring Controversies in Presidential Nominating Politics," University of Pittsburgh Press, Google Books, 2004)

Like any other method choosing a presidential ticket, **the direct national primary faces the problem** of making legitimate and authoritative nominations. This means **that the nominee must win a solid plurality, if not an outright majority, of the vote.** Ranney argued that **a vote based entirely on voters' first preferences would result in a choice less representative of the party following than an old-fashioned convention or sequence of state primaries. One way around this problem is to require a runoff between the top two candidates if none wins a specified proportion of the vote.** The Quie plan called for a runoff if no candidate won 50 percent of the national primary vote, as did the Weicker proposal. Rep. Joseph Gaydos (D-Pa.) set 45 percent as the minimum vote needed to win on the first round in his plan. **But the runoff option alters the strategic environment, encouraging candidates who have little chance of winning a first round to try anyway in hopes of getting into the runoff.**²⁶ **If the choice came down to two such candidates, one or both might lack credibility as the choice of a sincere majority.**

In response, the pro might contend that the status quo primary system actually undermines voter learning by turning the whole thing into an exhausting and vacuous media circus, and that the attributes that tend to contribute to primary success are poor indicators of whether the candidate would actually make a good president.

➤ *Pro Evidence: SQ bad for voter learning, rewards characteristics that don't make good presidents*

(Emmett H. Buell [prof emeritus of polis sci at Denison University & former director of the Richard G. Lugar Program in Politics & Public Service] & William G. Mayer [prof of polis ci at Northeastern University & Member of the Executive Council of the American Political Science Association], "Enduring Controversies in Presidential Nominating Politics," University of Pittsburgh Press, Google Books, 2004)

Nobody seems happy with the present nominating system—especially the patchwork maze of presidential primaries. The process strains patience and, critics say, eliminates good candidates. The current primary system plainly favors well-heeled out-of-office individuals who can devote their full attention to selected early state nominating battles. Thus candidates not currently holding office, Carter in 1976, and Reagan in 1980, **could spend up to a hundred days in Iowa, New Hampshire, and Florida, while officeholders such as Udall, Baker, Anderson, Kennedy, and the sitting presidents had to remain on their jobs. Our present nominating process has become a televised horse race focusing more on media appeal than on the competing ideas, programs, or character of the candidates.** More voters, to be sure, **take part** in primary elections than in caucuses and conventions. **But what about the quality of that participation? Primary voters often know little about the many candidates listed on the ballot.** Popularity polls, slick **spot ads, and television coverage of the early primaries offer** episodes and **spectacles, and the average citizen is hard pressed to separate significance from entertainment. "Winners"—sometimes with only 20 percent of the vote—in the early small state nomination contests are given undue media coverage. For example, Jimmy Carter's victories in Iowa and New Hampshire in 1976 led to an out-pouring of** cover and **human-interest stories on him. Voters in** New Hampshire and a few other **early primaries often virtually get the right to nominate their party's candidate. Candidates who do not do well in these early states get discouraged, and their financial contributors and volunteers desert them. In most presidential**



years, the nominees of both major parties are decided much too early in the process. Critics are also concerned, rightly we believe, about the declining importance of the national conventions. Now that nominations are often "sewed up" by early primaries, the national conventions have become ratifying rather than nominating conventions. Most delegates, bound by various state and party election rules, have little more to do than cast their predetermined required vote, enjoy a round of cocktail parties, pick up local souvenirs, and go home. It is little wonder that the networks are moving away from gavel-to-gavel coverage. A further complaint is that the current nominating system has diminished the role of party and public officials, and concomitantly increased the role of candidate loyalists and issue activists. Primaries bypass the local party structure by encouraging candidates and their managers to form candidate-loyalist brigades several months before the primaries. Elected officials generally are unwilling to become committed to one candidate or another until well along in the election year and hence they are often excluded from the process. But because most serious candidates for national office hold (or have held) elective office, the views of their peers can be particularly insightful. Because elected officials, especially members of Congress, have some obligation to implement the goals and platform of their party, they should participate in the development of the party positions. Elected officials plead to be brought back into the system; to be given incentives for involvement; to be given responsibility in selecting candidates and writing the platform. Let us integrate the national presidential party and the congressional party as one working unit where all the various components have some status and voice in the processes and outcomes. United States Senator Alan Cranston (D-Calif.) raises objections to the present system. He claims that few, if any, of the qualities that bring victory in primaries are the qualities the presidency demands: Primaries do not tell us how well a candidate will delegate authority. Nor do they demonstrate his ability to choose the best people for top government posts. Primaries don't tell us how effective a candidate will be in dealing with Congress, nor how capable a candidate will be at moving the national power structure, nor how good an educator of the American public a candidate would really be as president.... Primaries do not adequately test courage and wisdom in decision making—yet those are the ultimate tests of a good president.

Pros could also argue that the trend towards early voting reduces the value of an extended period of candidate learning, since many citizens of states with late primaries actually cast their ballots well before the results of their primary election are ever actually tabulated. This, the pro might say, results in the worst of both worlds: citizens commit their votes to a candidate early, subject to the whims of the moment and before having the benefit of a long vetting process, but without garnering any of the supposed benefits of a one-day primary (increased turnout, decreased polarization, equalized influence on the eventual outcome, etc.).

➤ *Pro Evidence: Early voting undercuts any advantages of SQ system*

(Daren Jonescu, prof of philosophy at Changwon National University in South Korea & Ph.D. in Philosophy from McMaster University, "GOP Primary Process Rigged," American Thinker, http://www.americanthinker.com/articles/2016/04/gop_primary_process_rigged.html, April 19 2016)

Early voting in some states began weeks before the official primary date. Therefore, many votes were cast when Trump was garnering all the attention as the surprise frontrunner, and before candidate withdrawals, debate debacles, David Duke fudgery, and Twitter madness had clarified just how ill-prepared, ill-informed, and ill-mannered he really was. Trump won the March 5 Louisiana primary by a narrow margin, but would likely have lost without the boatload of early votes cast for him during his late February hot streak, not



to mention the early votes cast for candidates no longer in the race on March 5. One must question the legitimacy of allowing indiscriminate early voting, which undermines the vetting process built into the prolonged primary schedule.

Counterplan Possibilities

Some con teams may want to expand their strategic options to include a counter-proposal of some type. While there are plenty of possible alternatives to the “status quo vs. one-day national primary” dichotomy, this guide will focus on the one that I consider the strongest¹²: the rotating regional primary system (RRP).

I say that I think this is your most strategically viable option for several reasons: it’s simple to understand, it is supported by some very credible experts, and there is evidence available directly comparing it to a one-day national primary.

The rotating regional primary plan prescribes that the nation be split into 4 regions, each of which will vote at some point over a 4-month primary calendar. The primary schedule would rotate in each election cycle, giving every region the chance to vote first in every 4th presidential election.

Supporters, including the National Association of Secretaries of State, argue that RRP would resolve the unfairness of a handful of unrepresentative states having a permanent monopoly on early-primary power, and mitigate much of the labyrinthine complexity of the status quo, while also preserving face-to-face retail-style campaigning and (comparatively) lower costs that are usually cited as the benefits of small-scale primaries.

➤ *Con Evidence: RRP would be best system*

(Beth Chapman, Alabama secretary of state & president of the National Association of Secretaries of State, “A National Primary Wouldn’t Work,” US News & World Report, <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/a-national-primary-wouldnt-work>, March 9 2012)

Instead of nationalizing our primary elections process, the National Association of Secretaries of State has long advocated a rotating regional primary system that gives every state an opportunity to play a role. Under the plan, the nation would be divided into four regions that would take turns voting first. By staggering the voting over a period of four months, this system would have the added benefit of giving voters a good look at the candidates and how they

¹² “Strongest” in terms of debate strategy; I make no claims regarding what system would actually be best in the real world.



perform (not to mention how they deal with public policy issues affecting each region of the United States). It could alleviate some of the fundraising pressures that drive candidates out of the competition by providing financial and organizational benefits that come with regional campaigning. This would result in a more logical, orderly, and fair process that gives every state and its voters a real opportunity to play a role in the selection of the presidential nominees with results that are representative of the whole country.

Make no mistake about it. Candidates, voters, and political party members are increasingly frustrated with and confused by our seemingly arbitrary and chaotic presidential nominee selection process. The current system pits state against state when it comes to establishing voting order and fails to give many voters a chance to have a real say in the selection of presidential nominees.

However, a national primary day is a recipe for failure. It would only make it harder and more expensive for all candidates to have a fair shot at competing. Voters in small and mid-size states would largely be ignored. If anything, it would limit the number of viable candidates and severely reduce choices for the American electorate. If you think money plays too much of a role in our political process now, I urge you to consider the ways in which regional primaries would be superior to a national primary day.

Some pro options for responding to the RRP CP are:

1. RRP still links to the “small candidates shut out”/ “too costly” issues. Although campaigning in regions may be less burdensome than a simultaneous nationwide effort, it would still be much more demanding than focusing on single states one at a time. Each region would necessarily contain 10+ states, which would still be a major challenge for “small” candidates trying to gain some early traction.
2. RRP also still links to complexity problems, which would be further exacerbated by rotating voting dates in each new election cycle.
3. Some regions are significantly politically biased—the South is quite conservative, while the East leans considerably to the left. These regions might therefore prefer different candidates than the rest of their party would, which risks skewing the election when they vote first.

Specific Reform Plan

Some pros, also, might want to introduce a more specific plan for reform. For those of you who like that sort of strategy, I’m including some evidence from a possible solvency advocate.

Essentially, the idea proposed here is a hybrid between a pure one-day primary and the current system. The plan suggests that states continue to have an extended season of individual votes, but these would be non-binding and used only for the purpose of enticing candidates who stand no chance of winning to drop out of the race. For example, if the candidate receives only 1% of the vote in multiple contests, he or she would likely conclude that continuing the



campaign was a waste of money and effort. However, the *real* primary¹³ would occur only at the end of these state-by-state votes, and would take place nationwide on a single day.

Advocates say that this system would offer the best of both worlds: voters benefit from the retail politics, individualized attention, and extended trial period offered by the current system, but would also avoid the pitfalls of giving certain states undue influence by virtue of the primary calendar. To put it in debate terms, in other words, it insulates the pro team against many common disadvantages, while still capturing the core advantages of the pro side of the debate. And, because it does endorse the adoption of a one-day national primary as a replacement for the status quo, it qualifies as an affirmation of the topic.

➤ *Pro Evidence: Plan solvency advocate*

(Rob Richie, executive director of FairVote, a national organization focused on the structural reform of American elections, "One Person, One Vote Should Come First," US News & World Report, <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/one-person-one-vote-should-come-first>, March 9 2012)

Every four years, **voters in a handful of states effectively pick the president**. Current Electoral College rules force candidates in November to focus their resources on a dozen swing states. In nomination contests, it's often even worse.

Barely 1 in 300 Americans lives in New Hampshire, but since 1952, only Hubert Humphrey in 1968 earned a major-party nomination without finishing in the top two in its primary. This year the nomination dreams of Michele Bachmann and Rick Perry were effectively ended by 121,501 Iowa Republicans, less than the population of Miramar, Fla., and 206 other cities.

Iowa and New Hampshire guard their first-in-the-nation status as zealously as grade schoolers hoarding crayons, but it's time for them to share. **We should** combine the best of what the current rules **promote** with **what large majorities of Americans support: a national primary where everyone votes on an equal basis.**

Starting small and having a series of contests over time, as we do now, **gives less well-financed candidates a better chance** and provides opportunities for debates in a range of states. Those values would only be enhanced by rotating which states vote early, as proposed by most reformers. Yet a fairer schedule isn't enough. **Contest order inevitably has an unfair impact on who wins and which issues garner candidate attention.**

The momentum earned from early state wins can lead to media attention and campaign donations that make a nomination inevitable, as with John Kerry in 2004 and John McCain in 2008.

That's why state contests should only winnow the field before we give everyone an equal vote in a national primary. States with a total of eight congressional districts would vote first. That might be a single state or a few small states. **Every two weeks for four months, more states would hold contests, representing a gradually increasing total population and changing in order every four years.** Convention delegates would be allocated proportionally to better reflect different opinions within the state. States might pay for primaries or let parties come up with their own rules.

No voter would be left behind, however. **In June, soon after the last state contests, there would be a national primary**—ideally **twinned with congressional primaries to further boost turnout.** In a competitive year, parties should advance three candidates, giving more credible candidates a chance to make their case and allowing strong candidates to win even if entering the contest late.

In both the national primary and state contests, **parties should try the Australian system of instant runoff voting. It avoids "vote splitting"—a candidate winning with 40 percent even though 60 percent strongly prefer another—by allowing**

¹³ Meaning, the one that actually determines who will become the official nominee



voters to indicate a first, second, and third choice and simulating a runoff. Not only would it uphold majority rule, but it would discourage excessive negative attacks because candidates would need to earn second choices from backers of losing candidates.

This combination plan addresses concerns that a national primary would limit deliberation and make money too important. In a national contest unfolding over time, candidates would be smart to campaign in every state, organizing grass-roots operations and learning about the diverse interests of our nation. Then, at the end, all Americans could come together within their party of choice to participate **in an election grounded in** that fundamental value

of representative democracy: **one person, one vote.** Let's be bold and make every vote count in 2016.

(Of course, if you choose to pursue this kind of strategy, you'll want to make sure to ask your judges about their expectations and philosophies on debate, as some PF judges might strongly reject the inclusion of plan-like elements.)

Conclusion

That brings us to the end of our introduction to the Nationals 2016 PF topic. We hope you now feel prepared to tackle the National Debate Tournament with rock-solid cases!

You can also always submit those completed cases to rachel.stevens@ncpa.org for a confidential, personalized critique.

Questions about this guide, the resolution, or debate in general? Don't hesitate to email!

Good luck, and don't forget to thank Debate Central when you're onstage accepting your national championship trophy!
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