

Parties and Elections in America, Fourth Edition
Chapter Eight

Outline

8 Presidential Nominations

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- A. The McGovern-Fraser Commission
- B. The 1972 Nomination
- C. Continuing Reform of the Process
- D. The Reform Movement: An Assessment

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III. Strategic Considerations in the Contests for Nominations

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B. The Rules of the Game

- 1. Proportional Representation versus Winner-Take-All Systems
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C. Strategic Use of Campaign Resources

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Key Concepts

“ADD-ON” DELEGATES

Convention delegates added to the total a state normally would be allocated in order to accommodate certain party and elected officials

CAUCUSES

Meetings of party members at which presidential preferences are expressed and those representing preferred candidates are selected to reflect those views

DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP COUNCIL (DLC)

An organization of moderate Democrats formed in order to bring the party back from the liberal extreme toward the center

DEMOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

Representation based on demographic characteristics such as gender, race, or age

FAIR REFLECTION OF PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE

Delegates are chosen to each subsequent level of the presidential nominating process in proportion to the level of support they receive at a previous level

FILING DEADLINES

The dates by which candidates must fulfill whatever requirements exist to gain a place on a ballot

FRONT-LOADING

The practice of holding primaries and caucuses near the beginning of the period in which such events are permitted

GEOGRAPHIC REPRESENTATION

Representation based on the geographic area in which a person resides

IDEOLOGICAL REPRESENTATION

Representation based on how individuals stand on the issues under debate

LOOPHOLE

A way around the intent of a law or regulation

MCGOVERN-FRASER COMMISSION

The first of a series of reform commissions that have restructured the way in which the Democratic party nominates candidates for president and vice president

NEW HAMPSHIRE'S "FIRST IN THE NATION" PRIMARY

The first primary held in every recent nominating season, so specified by New Hampshire state law that states that New Hampshire's primary is to be held at least a week in advance of that of any other state

PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE PRIMARIES

Primary elections in which voters cast their votes for presidential candidates or for delegates who will support specified presidential candidates

REGIONAL PRIMARIES

Presidential primaries scheduled so that those in any one region of the country are held on the same day

SUPERDELEGATES

Delegates to the Democratic National Convention who hold their seats by virtue of their office, for example, members of congress, senators, and governors

SUPER TUESDAY

The Tuesday during the primary season on which the most delegates are chosen

WINDOW CONCEPT

Analogous to the space program, in which a launch is only possible during a specified period of time, the concept that primaries and caucuses selecting delegates to presidential nominating conventions must be held between certain dates on the calendar

WINNER-TAKE-ALL PRIMARIES

Primary elections in which the plurality winner receives all of the delegates at stake

Questions for Discussion

1. Do you think that the nominating process for presidential candidates goes on too long?

How would you go about shortening it?

2. Some claim that the caucus system of selecting delegates to national nominating conventions is superior because it gives an advantage to those who care enough about the process to participate fully. Others claim that primary elections are a superior way to select delegates because more people participate. Does your state have primaries or caucuses? Which system do you favor? Why?
3. Turnout in presidential primaries is normally very low. Can you think of ways to stimulate more voter interest? Would your reforms be politically feasible?
4. This is a complex question, so think about it carefully. When you vote, you vote for one person only. Even if there are five candidates, in all nominating processes you get only one vote. What if a system were devised so that you could express your preference among all of the candidates running for your party's nomination, designating your first choice, second choice, and so on? Would you favor such a system? Such a system has in fact been devised and suggested—and a variation of it is used in caucus states. Why do you think it has not been more widely adopted?
5. Many reforms of the presidential nominating process have been proposed. One calls for having the conventions first and then holding a runoff primary between the two top finishers at the convention. How would you react to a system like that one?
6. Who is advantaged and who is disadvantaged in the presidential nominating system now in place? Given your answer to that question, how do you evaluate the system? If you

were going to change it, which of the reforms discussed in this chapter—or others that you know of—would you favor?