



RESEARCH BRIEF

EARLY “SUPER TUESDAY” PRESENTS HISTORIC OPPORTUNITY FOR LATINO VOTE TO PLAY A DECISIVE ROLE IN 2008 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTION NOMINATIONS

April 24, 2007

Our nation’s state policy makers, political parties, advocates and political observers are engaged in a vigorous debate regarding the impact of an increasingly early round of primaries/caucuses in 2008 and their impact on the future of the Presidential candidate nomination process in the United States. Numerous states have scheduled or are seriously considering scheduling their Presidential primaries/caucuses significantly earlier than in past Presidential elections. Proponents of these efforts hope to ensure that their state and its electorate will have a more meaningful opportunity to participate in the nominations process. As our nation grapples with the impact of these various proposals to change the Presidential nominating primaries process, it is important to consider the opportunities that these changes pose for the reinvigoration and expansion of U.S. democracy in the 21st Century.

This *Research Brief* analyzes the extent to which proposed changes in the 2008 Presidential primary schedule will make primary elections more representative of the nation’s diverse electorate, and provide an historic opportunity for U.S. Latinos, the second largest population group in the United States, to have a more meaningful voice in nominating major Presidential candidates.

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Prospects for an Inclusive Primaries Process in 2008

As of the writing of this *Brief*, California and New York have become the largest and most diverse states to officially move their Presidential primaries to early February. An additional 10 states have also moved their primary/caucus dates to take place on February 5th or earlier (see Appendix 1 for a detailed list of confirmed and potential early primary states). These actions add momentum to the efforts of several other states across the nation that are vying for a meaningful role in the 2008 Presidential nominations process. According to the National Association of Secretaries of States (NASS), 16 other states are currently considering earlier nomination dates.¹ As many as 23 states have scheduled or intend to schedule Presidential primaries or caucuses on what may become an unprecedented “Super Duper Tuesday” on February 5th.² Among the prospective early primary states, several include large concentrations of Latinos (Arizona³, Florida, Illinois, New York, New Mexico, New Jersey and Texas).

In addition, Nevada and South Carolina have already scheduled their primaries before February 5th. Most recently, the state of Florida also made public its intention to schedule an earlier primary on January 29, 2008, according to the updated “2008 State Primaries/Caucuses” calendar released by NASS. As a result, the current field of January lead-off states, which includes the smaller states of New Hampshire and Iowa, will be expanded with the addition of three states with substantially larger populations. Nevada has scheduled its Presidential caucuses on January 19th, following the Iowa caucuses, and before the New Hampshire primaries. South Carolina, has also scheduled its primaries for January 29th, one week immediately following the primaries in New Hampshire. While current discussion of these developments has focused on the potential impact that “frontloading” might have on prospective candidates and the influence of smaller states, it is also critical to examine their impact on the participation of all of our nation’s voters and the democratic process.

The expanded field of states with early primaries would offer greater opportunities for a larger share of Americans to meaningfully exercise their vote. If all states with serious intentions to move their primaries/caucuses to February 5th were to do so, more than half (56%) of American voters would have an opportunity to cast a vote for their nominee early in the 2008 election season. Under such a schedule, 10% of registered voters would have an opportunity to participate in primaries or caucuses in January, another 46% the first week of February, and 44% of the electorate would cast a ballot after the February 5th “Super Duper Tuesday” (See Appendix 1 for state breakdowns on their share of registered voters). The state of California alone accounts for 10% of the total U.S. electorate. By comparison, Iowa and New Hampshire who for decades have opened the primary season, represent less than 1% and 1.2% of the total U.S. electorate, respectively. In all, nearly 80 million voters may have an opportunity to select their nominee in a primary or caucus before the race for either party’s nomination is decided in 2008.

Traditionally, a large share of U.S. registered voters have not had an opportunity to vote for a Presidential nominee until later in the primary season. Later primaries have been viewed as a disadvantage to voters in these states because often leading nominees have been nearly decided by earlier primaries. For example, during the 2004 Presidential nominations, one-quarter of the delegates to the convention had been pledged before the end of February, clearly defining a field of leading candidates, and in some cases even narrowing the field, after candidates with poor showings in the first few primaries and caucuses decided to withdraw from the race.⁴ For states holding their nominating elections (e.g. primaries or caucuses) in March or later, the nomination race had been virtually decided.

¹ National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS). “Calendar of 2008 State Primaries/Caucuses.” Updated: April 9, 2007. <http://www.nass.org/releases/2008%20Presidential%20Primaries%20Calendar.pdf>.

² For a detailed summary and analysis of recent efforts see “More Primaries: Democracy in Action P2008.” <http://www.gwu.edu/~action/2008/chrnothp08.html>.

³ No Legislation is required to move the state’s primaries to February 5th. Under state law, the Governor is authorized to change the date of the Presidential preference primary by proclamation.

⁴ Report of the Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling to Governor Howard Dean, Chairman, Democratic National Committee. December 13, 2005.

Table 1. Share of U.S. Electorate Participation, by Primary Schedule

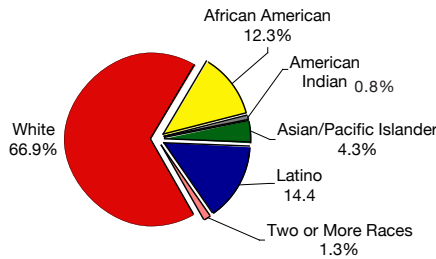
Primary Schedule	Registered Voters	% of U.S. Electorate
January Caucuses & Primaries	13,812,000	10%
February 5th Super Tuesday	65,193,000	46%
After Super Tuesday	62,774,000	44%
Total U.S. Electorate	141,779,000	

Early Participation by Larger States Provides Greater Diversity

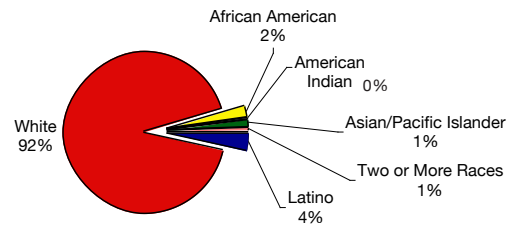
Over the past two decades, the population in the United States has become increasingly diverse. According to 2005 population estimates produced by the United States Census Bureau, almost one-third of the U.S. population is now non-white (31.8%). However, the states with the earliest primaries or caucuses, such as Iowa and New Hampshire, which have played a significantly decisive role in determining the parties' Presidential nominees are comprised of populations that do not reflect the diversity of 21st Century America. Some pundits and the states themselves argue that these states offer greater opportunities for face-to-face campaigning and a more engaged and informed electorate. Without diversity, however, our nation loses a diversity of perspectives on Presidential candidates and important opportunities to engage and include a greater and more representative share of voters in our democracy. According to 2005 data, nine out every ten people in Iowa and New Hampshire are white, 90% and 94% respectively. By comparison, in California, 55% of the state population was non-white in 2005. The early participation of California and other large states, like Illinois, New York, Nevada, and Texas would strengthen the democratic nature of the primaries by giving a far larger share of the American electorate a meaningful voice in the process. Additionally, greater diversity in the electorate that participates in early primaries would encourage candidates to develop more inclusive messages during their campaigns, by addressing issues in a manner that more effectively incorporates the policy priorities and perspectives of a diverse cross-section of the American electorate.

Chart 1. National and State Comparisons of Race and Ethnicity

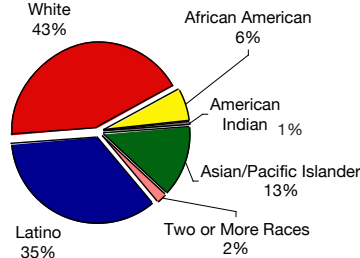
2005 U.S. Population, by Major Race and Ethnicity



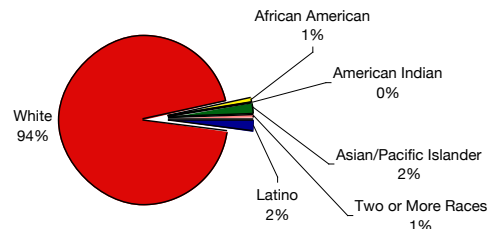
Iowa Population, by Race and Ethnicity



California Population, by Race and Ethnicity



New Hampshire Population, by Race and Ethnicity



The 2008 Presidential Primaries May Offer Latinos an Historic Opportunity

The expanded list of February 5th “Super Duper Tuesday” states will afford a substantial share of the Latino electorate an historic opportunity to play a decisive role in deciding the nominee of at least one of the two major political parties. Over the past decade, the Latino vote has grown by nearly 50%, increasing total Latino voter registration in the United States by one-third, in comparison to 1996. This growth was most evident in the 2004 presidential elections where more than 7.5 million Latinos voted, comprising a little more than six percent of the total vote in the November election. Latino turnout in 2004 represented an increase of nearly three million additional votes over turnout in the 1996 Presidential election.

Despite the rapid growth of the Latino electorate in the past decade, some political strategists and researchers have not considered the Latino vote to be decisive in the outcome of Presidential elections. These strategists have focused on voters in states they believe to be most “competitive” – states where neither Presidential contender has been able to garner enough votes to have a large margin of victory. When strategists look at where Latino voters are concentrated, they see that almost two-thirds of the Latino electorate is concentrated in states considered to be non-competitive states, such as California, Illinois, New York, and Texas (Table 2.). Because of the large margins of victory in favor of either Democratic or Republican candidates, these states are often characterized as “safe” states for the respective candidate. As a result, candidates devote little resources to campaigning or voter mobilization in these states. This campaign approach greatly diminishes the opportunity for voters to interact with or learn more about the candidates and reduces the likelihood that voters will be motivated to participate in the election.

Table 2. The Latino Electorate in “Non-Competitive” States

State	Latino Registered Voters	% Share of Total US Latino Electorate	Presidential Margin of Victory 2004 ⁵
California	2,455,000	26.4%	9.9%
Illinois	343,000	3.7%	10.3%
New York	754,000	8.1%	18.3%
Texas	2,170,000	23.3%	22.9%
Total U.S. Latino Voter Registration			9,297,000

Under the prospective early primaries schedule, however, Latinos will play an integral role in deciding the fate of Presidential hopefuls. More than 80% of the Latino electorate will have an opportunity to cast their vote for a Presidential nominee on or before February 5th. Among the pool of “Super Duper Tuesday” states, Latinos comprise more than one of every ten voters in at least five states (Arizona, California, Florida, New Mexico, and Texas). In Nevada, scheduled to be the second state in the 2008 primaries, Latinos comprise 8.6% of the registered voters in the state, a significant share of the state’s electorate.

Table 3. Latino States in Prospective Early Presidential Primary State Pool

State	Total Registered Voters	Latino Registered Voters	% Share of State Electorate	% Total U.S. Latino Electorate
Arizona*	2,485,000	354,000	14.2%	3.8%
California	14,193,000	2,455,000	17.3%	26.4%
Florida*	8,219,000	924,000	11.2%	9.9%
Illinois	6,437,000	343,000	5.3%	3.7%
New Jersey	4,085,000	331,000	8.1%	3.6%
New Mexico*	936,000	316,000	33.8%	3.4%
Nevada*	965,000	83,000	8.6%	0.9%
New York	8,624,000	754,000	8.7%	8.1%
Texas	9,681,000	2,170,000	22.4%	23.3%
Total	55,625,000	7,730,000	13.9%	83.1%
United States	141,779,000	9,297,000	6.6%	-

* Competitive 2004 Presidential states

⁵Margin of victory was calculated using data from: “Federal Elections 2004: Election Results for the U.S. President, the U.S. Senate and the U.S. House of Representatives”, Federal Election Commission. United States of America.

Thus, the 2008 Presidential Primaries may offer more than seven million registered U.S. Latinos an opportunity to influence the major parties' nomination of presidential candidates. This historic development is unprecedented in U.S. Presidential politics and may make our democracy more representative by providing an important segment of the American electorate a more meaningful voice in the nominations process.

Current Proposals for Restructuring Presidential Primaries

While a growing number of states seek a place at the front of the line of primaries, in an attempt to help shape the ticket for what may be another highly competitive, expensive, and high turnout Presidential election, election officials and advocacy groups have developed proposals to restructure the nominations process. The Democratic and Republican parties have also taken steps to address their own concerns about the impact of states' efforts to move their primaries to earlier dates.

Both states and the political parties have influence on the Presidential nominations process. States, through proclamation or legislative action, have the power to set the dates in which primary elections take place. Political parties, however, control the rules for awarding and allocating convention delegates to candidates. A recent report issued by The Century Foundation highlighted two of the more popular proposals to restructure the Presidential primary calendar.⁶ The first is a plan proposed by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS). The plan recommends a system of rotating regional primaries. A second plan analyzed by the report is one proposed by the Center for Voting and Democracy, which calls for an incremental approach. Under what the Center calls "The American Plan," primaries would be ranked and scheduled according to the size of the state's population. Less populated states would hold primaries first, followed by the more populous states.

As for the political parties, the two major parties have announced approaches which generally feature a system of penalties for states that schedule their primaries early, and rewards for those that schedule them later in the election season.

Democrats:

The Century Foundation's report also outlined the approach adopted by the Democratic Party:

The Democratic Party has taken two steps to try to hold back this wave of schedule changes. Under its new rules, if a state holds a primary before the four currently established early primaries and caucuses and before February 5, the party will not seat 50 percent of that state's delegates at the convention. Also, a presidential candidate who campaigns in a state that violates these rules may not receive any pledged delegates from that state. The Democratic Party also adopted a recommendation of the Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling that the calendar be divided into four stages, with additional delegates awarded to the 2008 Democratic National Convention applied in proportion to the pledged delegates for each state, based on when the state's first determining step in the delegate selection process is scheduled to occur:

Stage I: March 4 through March 17; states awarded 15 percent additional delegates

Stage II: March 18 through April 7; states awarded 20 percent additional delegates

Stage III: April 8 through April 28; states awarded 30 percent additional delegates

Stage IV: April 29 through June 10; states awarded 40 percent additional delegates⁷

⁶ Wang, Tova Andrea (2007). "The Presidential Primary System's Democracy Problems". The Century Foundation. March 13, 2007. <http://www.tcf.org/list.asp?type=PB&pubid=604>

⁷ *ibid.*

Republicans:

On the other side, the Republican Party established its rules for the 2008 Presidential Primaries calendar during the 2004 Republican National Convention. Under the party's charter, rules governing the delegate selection process may only be changed or amended by the National Convention. Thus, during its 2004 Republican National Convention, the party ruled that no state shall hold Republican primaries or caucuses before the first Tuesday in February of 2008.⁸

All of these stakeholders, together with the political parties, will be closely monitoring the impact of these changes. Political parties will be evaluating the effect of a longer campaign season on fundraising and candidate strategies. Advocates will be watching to see whether political participation increases. Election officials will be gauging the impact on election administration. The outcome of these assessments will shape the future of the primary nominations process for 2012.

⁸ Report of The Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling to Governor Howard Dean, Chairman Democratic National Committee. As adopted on December 10, 2005.

Conclusion

The impact of a “Super Duper Tuesday” on 2008 voter turnout, campaign strategies, and the nominating process remains to be seen. It is unclear whether the primary schedule will have serious effects on the breadth and intensity of political campaigning in the primaries. It is also unclear whether the opportunity to participate in a primary that has not yet been decided will help spur increased interest and higher turnout among registered voters.

We will not be able to fully assess the impact of changes in the primary schedule until political observers and researchers conduct post-election analyses. However, based on our examination of the geographic distribution and inclusion of a larger share of the American electorate, the increased role of Latino voters, and the proposed changes in the Presidential primary schedule, it is clear that in 2008, millions of American voters will have an unprecedented opportunity to play a decisive role in nominating major presidential candidates. Additionally, the electorate that will help decide the primaries will be more representative of 21st Century America, which will strengthen our democracy by making it more representative and responsive to the voices of all Americans. In addition, the proposed changes in the primary schedule represent a new opportunity for the nation’s growing Latino electorate, which now includes as many as ten million registered voters. Because of the battleground state strategy of parties and candidates and the geographic distribution of the Latino electorate, the ability of Latino voters to influence Presidential politics has been limited; the larger number of early primaries/caucuses in states with significant Latino populations will now offer this electorate an unprecedented opportunity to shape the 2008 Presidential ticket. With, potentially, more than 80% of the Latino electorate in the United States included in the early round of primaries, “Super Duper Tuesday” may also translate to “*Super martes*” in 2008.

So far, serious candidates from both parties have demonstrated little trouble in adapting to the prospects of a packed early primary schedule. Their fundraising operations have been in full swing, as they actively solicit contributions in key states like California, New York, and Texas. This is no surprise, as one of the important criteria for serious presidential candidates is the ability to construct a national campaign infrastructure that can fundraise, and more importantly, mobilize supporters. The real challenge for Presidential primary candidates will be their ability to connect with diverse cross-sections of the American electorate, as opposed to the homogeneous public of the traditional early primary states. In the past the lack of diversity in the early stages of the Presidential nominations process allowed candidates to micro-message, developing more one dimensional messages that appealed to a regional cast of predominantly white voters. The emerging political realities of the 2008 primary season, with the prospects, for all intents and purposes, of a national primary taking place February 5, 2008, will now force candidates to run regionally diverse and more racially and ethnically inclusive campaigns.

Note on Methodology

Statistical analyzes presented in this brief were produced using data obtained from the U.S. Census Bureau's Population Estimates for 2005 and Current Population Survey report "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004."

Ethnic Composition of Population: These percentages are derived from the Census Bureau's July 1, 2005 state population estimates. The Census Bureau calculates these estimates based on Census 2000 data, where respondents were first asked to indicate whether or not they were of Hispanic origin. They were then asked to identify their race, and could indicate more than one racial category. The "Latino" category in the *National and State Comparisons of Race and Ethnicity* table represents the Bureau's estimate of all persons of Hispanic origin, regardless of their race. The "White," "Black," "Asian/Pacific Islander," and "Native American" categories are based on the estimates of non-Hispanics who are of only one race. The "Two or More Races" category is based on the estimates of non-Hispanics who are of two or more races.

Current Population Survey data on "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004": This *Research Brief* utilizes Current Population Survey (CPS) data from the U.S. Bureau of the Census report on "Voting and Registration in the Election of November 2004". The CPS data and the survey from which they are derived are subject to certain limitations. First, actual voter turnout and registration may be overestimated by the CPS, because individuals may tend to over-report electoral participation. Additionally, the CPS is a national survey, and estimates derived for smaller sub-groups within the national population (for example, where the Latino population of a state is relatively small), may be based on relatively small sample sizes. Consequently, the margin of error associated with estimates of voting and registration for these sub-groups is greater than the margin associated with the national population or larger population sub-groups.

Appendix 1.

Reported State Primaries/Caucuses, by Voter Registration				
Reported Primary Date	Early Primary	State	Registered Voters	% Share of US Electorate
TBD		Alaska	334,000	0.2%
2/5	*	Alabama	2,418,000	1.7%
2/5	*	Arkansas	1,328,000	0.9%
2/5	*	Arizona	2,485,000	1.8%
2/5	*	California	14,193,000	10.0%
2/5	*	Colorado	2,307,000	1.6%
2/5	*	Connecticut	1,695,000	1.2%
2/5	*	Delaware	415,000	0.3%
1/29	*	Florida	8,219,000	5.8%
2/5	*	Georgia	3,948,000	2.8%
Dem 2/26 GOP 3/2		Hawaii	497,000	0.4%
1/14	*	Iowa	1,674,000	1.2%
5/27		Idaho	663,000	0.5%
2/5	*	Illinois	6,437,000	4.5%
5/6		Indiana	3,031,000	2.1%
2/5	*	Kansas	1,338,000	0.9%
5/20		Kentucky	2,231,000	1.6%
2/9		Louisiana	2,413,000	1.7%
3/4		Massachusetts	3,483,000	2.5%
2/12		Maryland	2,676,000	1.9%
Dem 2/10 GOP 3/21		Maine	824,000	0.6%
TBD	*	Michigan	5,364,000	3.8%
3/4	*	Minnesota	3,080,000	2.2%
2/5	*	Missouri	3,336,000	2.4%
3/11		Mississippi	1,510,000	1.1%
2/5	*	Montana	519,000	0.4%
2/5	*	North Carolina	4,292,000	3.0%

Source: Reported primary dates were obtained from the latest 2008 Presidential primaries schedule released by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), April 9, 2007. States in bold indicate that the early primary date has been officially established. Unbolded states identified as early primary states include those seriously considering moving their Presidential primary/caucus to the reported date.

Reported State Primaries/Caucuses, by Voter Registration (continued)

Reported Primary Date	Early Primary	State	Registered Voters	% Share of US Electorate
TBD		North Dakota	412,000	0.3%
5/13		Nebraska	918,000	0.6%
1/22	*	New Hampshire	716,000	0.5%
2/5	*	New Jersey	4,085,000	2.9%
2/5	*	New Mexico	936,000	0.7%
1/19	*	Nevada	965,000	0.7%
2/5	*	New York	8,624,000	6.1%
2/5	*	Oklahoma	1,781,000	1.3%
3/4		Ohio	6,003,000	4.2%
2/5	*	Oregon	2,049,000	1.4%
2/5	*	Pennsylvania	6,481,000	4.6%
2/5	*	Rhode Island	522,000	0.4%
Dem 1/29 GOP 2/2	*	South Carolina	2,238,000	1.6%
6/3		South Dakota	425,000	0.3%
2/5	*	Tennessee	2,739,000	1.9%
2/5	*	Texas	9,681,000	6.8%
2/5	*	Utah	1,141,000	0.8%
2/12		Virginia	3,441,000	2.4%
3/4		Vermont	354,000	0.2%
5/27		Washington	3,133,000	2.2%
2/19		Wisconsin	3,225,000	2.3%
5/13		West Virginia	935,000	0.7%
GOP 1/22 Dem 5/10	*	Wyoming	265,000	0.2%
United States			141,779,000	

Source: Reported primary dates were obtained from the latest 2008 Presidential primaries schedule released by the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS), April 9, 2007. States in bold indicate that the early primary date has been officially established. Unbolded states identified as early primary states include those seriously considering moving their Presidential primary/caucus to the reported date.



The National Association of Latino Elected and Appointed Officials (NALEO) Educational Fund is the nation's leading non-partisan, non-profit organization that facilitates the full participation of Latinos in the American political process, from citizenship to public service.