

HOUSE BILL REPORT

HJM 4006

As Reported by House Committee On:
State Government

Brief Description: Proposing a regional presidential primary.

Sponsors: Representatives Miloscia, Armstrong, Hunt, Shabro, Haigh, McDermott, Tom, Moeller, Benson and Wallace; by request of Secretary of State.

Brief History:

Committee Activity:

State Government: 1/28/03, 3/4/03 [DP].

<p>Brief Summary of Bill</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">· Asks Congress to create a regional presidential primary.
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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT

Majority Report: Do pass. Signed by 7 members: Representatives Haigh, Chair; Miloscia, Vice Chair; Shabro, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Hunt, McDermott, Tom and Wallace.

Minority Report: Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Armstrong, Ranking Minority Member; and Nixon.

Staff: Anne Warwick (786-7291).

Background:

In 1989 Initiative 99 (I-99) to the Legislature was approved, establishing a presidential primary. I-99 eliminated the presidential nominating caucus system in Washington. The people of Washington declared the caucus system restrictive to voter participation and discriminating towards the elderly, infirm, women, handicapped, evening workers, and others unable to attend caucuses. The intent of I-99 was to make the nominating process more open and representative, and to provide opportunity for voter access and convenience. Party rules continue to dictate the selection of delegates, according to the result of the primary.

Under state election law, the Secretary of State is responsible for naming candidates on the presidential primary ballot. Candidates are placed on the presidential primary ballot if they are generally advocated or recognized in national news media, or nominated by petition containing the signatures of at least 1,000 registered voters declaring themselves affiliated with the same political party as the candidate. Minor party and independent candidates for president are nominated through a separate process and will not appear on the presidential primary ballot. To gain a spot on the general election ballot, minor parties and independent candidates for president must submit 200 valid petition signatures obtained through a nominating convention.

Summary of Bill:

Joint Memorial 4006 asks Congress to establish a rotating regional presidential primary. The regional presidential primary system will allow national convention delegates to be grouped by region. Beginning in 2004 the West regional presidential primary will be in March, the Midwest in April, the South in May, and the East in June. The rotation will continue in 2008, with the Midwest moving to first and so on.

Provisions will be established to assure that two states with lower populations can conduct a presidential primary before the regional primaries occur. The bill recognizes the historically important role that smaller states play in presidential primaries. The states of New Hampshire and Iowa will be allowed to conduct their primary election or caucus before the start of the rotation process.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Not Requested.

Testimony For: This is an important matter of public policy on a national level. The presidential primary process has gotten out of hand. States are pushing for earlier and earlier dates, almost creating a national presidential primary in February and March. The packed election calendar forces candidates to have an extremely large bankroll in order to participate successfully on a national level. The idea of having a regional presidential primary has been around since the 1970s, and in fact this Legislation is brought forward by the National Association of Secretary of States. The process needs to be reexamined and this Joint Memorial to Congress is a start.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: Representative Miloscia, prime sponsor; and Sam Reed, Secretary of State.