
State Government Committee

HB 2297

Brief Description: Canceling the presidential primary in 2004.

Sponsors: Representatives Haigh, Armstrong, Kagi, Nixon, Santos, Hinkle, Shabro, Tom, Fromhold, Delvin, Dickerson, Alexander, McCoy, Ahern, Simpson, Woods, Clibborn, McDonald, Kenney, Miloscia, Chase, Lantz, Bailey, Schual-Berke, Hudgins, Flannigan, Dunshee, Ruderman, Darneille, Upthegrove, Linville, Blake, Hunter, Quall, Hunt, Morris, Wallace, Kessler and Veloria; by request of Governor Locke.

Brief Summary of Bill

- Cancels the presidential primary for the 2004 election.

Hearing Date: December 4, 2003.

Staff: Katie Blinn (786-7114).

Background:

Political parties in Washington historically selected their nominee for President and allocated their delegates to the national nominating conventions through party caucuses. In 1989, the Legislature approved an Initiative to the Legislature which established the presidential primary. The Secretary of State must conduct a primary each presidential election year to allow citizens the opportunity to express their preferences as to the major political party candidates for President. Following the primary, the state and county committees of each major political party are provided lists of voters who participated in their party's presidential primary.

The original legislation required delegates to the party national conventions to be allocated to each candidate for President based on the results of the preference primary. Votes cast for a particular presidential candidate were considered votes cast for delegate positions committed to that candidate. The selection of actual individuals as delegates remained a party function. In 1995, the Legislature amended the law to allow party delegates to be allocated in whole or in part based on the results of party precinct caucuses, rather than the preference primary. The 1995 legislation also requires the Office of the Secretary of State to amend its administrative rules to comply with the major political parties' national and state rules.

The 2004 presidential primary is scheduled to take place on March 2, 2004. There are currently nine major candidates seeking the Democratic Party's nomination for President, and only one major candidate seeking the Republican Party's nomination for President. The State Democratic Party decided in August 2003 to allocate all of its delegates to the 2004 Democratic National Convention based strictly on the results of party caucuses to be held February 7, 2004. The State Republican Party decided in September 2003 to allocate one third of its delegates to the Republican National Convention based on the results of the presidential primary, and two-thirds of its delegates based on the results of party caucuses to be held March 9, 2004. The estimated cost of the 2004 presidential primary is \$6 million.

Summary of Bill:

The presidential primary is cancelled for the 2004 election. The presidential primary is reinstated at the end of 2004.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Available.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.