
State Government Committee

HJM 4006

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 Summary of Bill

- Asks Congress to create a regional presidential primary.

Hearing Date: 1/28/03

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 state. 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 one thousand 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. 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.