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Outside Looking In

How Shutting Washington, D.C. Out of the Presidential Primary Process Hurts Black and Urban America

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Presidential elections are the only national elections in the United States, with all other elections taking place only within single states. Unfortunately, with every election cycle, fewer and fewer Americans are able to play a meaningful part in this decision. This problem is not limited to the shrinking number of battleground states in the general election. Frontloaded primary schedules have resulted in candidates being nominated by just a handful of states with early primaries and caucuses.

Both parties have indicated the need for reform. Comprehensive reform to create an inclusive nomination process that produces strong general election candidates is a major undertaking; however, the Democratic National Committee (DNC) is exploring a partial remedy for 2008 by allowing one or two states to join Iowa and New Hampshire in holding early nomination contests. After nearly voting in 2000 to revamp its schedule dramatically, the Republican National Committee (RNC) may also soon revisit primary reform possibilities.

This report affirms the need for reform, particularly due to the under-representation of black and urban voters in the nomination process. It then analyzes potential reform options for 2012 and beyond. Looking to the short-term, it makes the case for Democrats selecting Washington, D.C. for an early primary or caucus in 2008. Not only would an early Washington, D.C. contest provide an opportunity for citizens without Congressional representation to have a voice in our national politics, but it would also benefit the party by better reflecting the preferences of black and urban voters from across the country whose voices are under-represented in the current primary system.

Introduction

"[The first-in-the-nation primary]... gives light...to our plight here in the District of Columbia: our lack of voting rights, our lack of statehood." – A. Scott Bolden, D.C. Democratic Statehood Committee Chairman

In 2004, the District of Columbia held an historic first-in-the-nation Democratic presidential primary election prior to the traditional spot held by New Hampshire. The D.C. Democratic Statehood Committee (DSC) and others advocated this change as a way to raise national awareness of the District's lack of Congressional representation by inducing candidates to campaign in the city and address the issue. However, the DNC refused to accept the delegates selected in this primary because it fell before the opening of the DNC primary window. For this reason, the DSC made the District's primary into a non-binding referendum and instead chose the official delegates in a later February caucus. Meanwhile, national party leaders threatened punishment against candidates who participated in the non-binding primary. This caused many major candidates, including John Kerry and John Edwards, to remove themselves from the ballot. Although the District received some prominent support for its efforts in the national media, the first-in-the-nation primary was not as successful as hoped in getting major candidates to address directly the issue of Congressional representation for the District.

Taxation without representation is not the only difference between the District and other states. Beyond highlighting the issue of District residents' lack of voting representation, there exist several other unique characteristics of the city's voting population that make it an important demographic group. Indeed, the District holds a unique position as a test of candidates' appeal to both a majority urban primary electorate, and a majority African American population. Correspondingly, both the Republican and Democratic parties in the city are unlike most of their state counterparts, where both urban and black voters' are often balanced against white rural and suburban voters.

Ideally, the District will be able to hold a competitive and meaningful primary that is recognized by both the DNC and RNC and contested by all the presidential hopefuls.

Washington, D.C. is now looking to again hold the first-in-the-nation primary in 2008. This time, however, both the Democratic and Republican Parties are exploring revising their nomination schedules for 2008 and beyond. While the District should keep the option of holding its primary outside the Democratic window, it should first consider how it could benefit under the various reform proposals currently under consideration by the parties. Ideally, the District will be able to hold a competitive and meaningful primary that is recognized by both the DNC and the RNC and contested by all the presidential hopefuls.

Creating a Nomination Schedule

It is easy to understand what states hope to gain from an advantageous spot in the nomination calendar – a platform for raising their own issues on a national level and the opportunity to influence the parties' eventual nominees. The Democratic and Republican Parties necessarily view primary reform from a different angle. When drafting rules for the nomination process, the parties have two basic areas of concern: on one hand, they are looking for a process that is as fair as possible for the greatest number of states and voters; on the other hand,

[1] Costantini, Bob. "First in the Nation, Last in the Hearts of Party Leaders." *Evote.com*. October 3, 2003.

they want to create a schedule that will nominate the strongest candidate for the general election and give them an advantage with battleground state voters and key constituency groups. There are multiple approaches to building a schedule that will nominate the strongest candidate, such as favoring states whose voters accurately reflect the national party membership or represent key constituent groups for the party.

The District has two unique demographic characteristics that the parties should value when placing it into the nomination schedule. First, it is the only primary jurisdiction that is entirely urban; indeed, no state has a majority of its population living in cities of at least 250,000. Second, it is the only jurisdiction with a majority black population. These are also the two qualities that the first contests, in New Hampshire and Iowa, are accused of most lacking when other states advocate for primary reform. This report will explore the role black voters and urban voters play in each party's nominating process as well as the role played by Washington, D.C. In addition, it will analyze various reform options under consideration, looking specifically at what they would mean for District voters.

The District …is the only primary jurisdiction that is entirely urban…it is the only jurisdiction with a majority black population.

Methodology and Assumptions:

This report is based on two basic assumptions regarding voter preference in presidential primaries: first, African American voters exhibit cohesive voting patterns distinct from their white counterparts within a particular party; second, urban voters exhibit cohesive voting patterns distinct from their suburban and rural counterparts within a particular party. Although proving these cleavages is beyond the scope of this report, numerous successful lawsuits brought under the Voting Rights Act were founded on these clear differences.

The caveat to both of the above assumptions is that voters can only exhibit these preferences when they are given a range of viable candidates. For this reason, this report will look only at competitive nomination processes, defined as contests that do not feature an incumbent President or Vice-President.

This report will use two measures of urban population – cities with populations of at least 100,000 and cities with populations of at least 250,000. Although there are a number of other definitions of urban population, these are particularly useful in comparing state voting population demographics with those in Washington, D.C.

Source: All demographic data come from U.S. Census 2000, including data that refer to nomination schedules from years other than 2000.

Black Voters in the Democratic Nomination Process

Of the black population that voted on or before Super Tuesday in 2004, over half of it was from only five states…. A candidate can win decisively in all of these places without any support from black voters.

The Democratic Party should have a clear interest in nominating a candidate who appeals to black voters. Not only do black voters make up nearly 25% of Democratic primary and caucus participants (even though African Americans make up less than 13% of the total population), but they are also one of the most reliably Democratic voting demographics, preferring Democrats over Republicans by a margin of more than nine to one.[2] Sixty-six percent of African American registered voters identify as Democrats, while only 7% identify as Republican.[3] As the DNC considers giving western states and Hispanic voters a more important role in the primary process, it must remember to look at where black voters fit into this schedule, and how to create scheduling incentives for candidates to reach out to diverse groups of voters.

At first glance, the current Democratic primary process seems relatively race neutral. In the 2004 primary schedule, 54% of the black population and 56% of the white population resided in states voting on or before Super Tuesday. The 1992 schedule was also equitable by this measure, with 35% of the black population and 30% of the white population having an opportunity to vote on or before Super Tuesday. These numbers, however, do not accurately reflect black voting strength in the nomination schedule. Of the black population that voted on or before Super Tuesday in 2004, over half of it was from only five states (NY, CA, MI, VA, OH); in each of these states, blacks make up less than twenty percent of the total population and less than half of the primary electorate. A candidate can win in all of these places without any support from black voters.

The District is the only jurisdiction that can guarantee the preference of black urban voters will not be overwhelmed by the preference of the white majority.

The ten states in Table 1 have the highest black populations as percentages of the total state population. Although the District has a significantly higher proportion of blacks than any of the states, blacks make up a majority or near majority of Democratic voters in some of the strong Republican states. However, there are a few factors that may make the District more appealing to Democrats than these other states. First, all but two of these states are in the south, a region that the Democratic Party has moved away from as the region becomes more Republican. Second, although these states have significant black populations, only in Louisiana, Alabama and Mississippi does at least one-third of this population live in large urban areas (cities with at least 100,000 people). The other states in this list fall far below the national total of 40.16% of blacks living in large urban areas. The District is the only jurisdiction that can guarantee that the preference of black urban voters will not be overwhelmed by the preference of the white majority. This becomes even more important when looking at how cities with large black populations are overwhelmed by the rest of the population in the states in which they are located.

[2] "New Hampshire Demoratic Voters Reflect Attitudes of Democrats Elsewhere, Latest Annenberg Polling Data Show," *National Annenberg Election Survey 2004*, January 23, 2004.
[3] "Blacks, Hispanics Resist Republican Appeals But Conservative White Christians Are Stronger Supporters Than In 2000, National Annenberg Election Survey Data Show," *National Annenberg Election Survey 2004*,July 25, 2004.

Table 1. Black Population Percentages by State

State	% Black	Urban Black Population*	Urban black Population as % of State Population
District of Columbia	60.0	100.0	100.0
Mississippi	36.3	17.8	6.5
Louisiana	32.5	40.1	13.1
South Carolina	29.5	4.5	1.3
Georgia	28.7	23.0	6.6
Maryland	27.9	28.4	7.9
Alabama	26.0	36.2	9.4
North Carolina	21.6	31.0	6.7
Virginia	19.6	42.3	8.3
Delaware	19.2	0.0	0.0

*% of Black Population in Cities 100,000

Urban Voters in the Republican Nomination Process

Given the District's solidly Democratic partisanship and the fact that the recent effort to move its primary occurred in an election cycle featuring an incumbent Republican president, it is not surprising that primary reform for the District has been almost exclusively a Democratic issue. However, even if primary reform is successful on the Democratic side, the District will be best served by bringing the Republican Party on board as well to ensure that each party will be able to hold a meaningful primary in the District.

A meaningful and competitive primary in the District would provide an important party-building opportunity for the Republican Party. Although the Democratic Party has long held a virtual monopoly on the black vote, the Republican Party may be starting to make inroads into this demographic. In recent years, the Republican Party has made significant efforts to reach out to black communities and has worked to diversify its slate of candidates. An early Republican primary in the District would allow black voters, particularly undecided voters, to raise their issues with candidates. Furthermore, it would help candidates develop a message that appeals to black voters as they use media that reaches a majority black audience.

Beyond racial considerations, the District provides the best opportunity for the RNC to test the appeal of its candidates among urban Republicans. Just as urban black populations have few opportunities to have their primary preferences decide statewide races, the total statewide population in most states overshadows urban Republican populations, another group that is often a minority. If this group indeed has different primary preferences than their suburban and rural counterparts, the party should consider a District primary as a way to test candidate approval among these voters. Even a cursory glance at Republican

officials elected in urban areas, such as Mayors Rudy Giuliani and Michael Bloomberg in New York City, indicates a divergence from the current Republican Party Platform. In fact, contrary to the national Republican Party, the District of Columbia's Republican Party platform affirmatively takes no stance on the otherwise polarizing issue of abortion rights, while specifically rebuking efforts to place definitions of marriage in the U.S. Constitution.[4]

"Because there are various views in our Party on right to life/choice, the District of Columbia Republican Committee does not support any language in the platform on this issue."

D.C. Republican Party Platform

Again, a comparison between populations of large urban areas and the populations of their respective states illustrates how these voters can have a difficult time influencing statewide elections when their views diverge from voters in other parts of their state. Over one-quarter (26.6%) of the U.S. population lives in cities of at least 100,000 people and nearly one-fifth (17.6%) of the population lives in cities of at least 250,000 people. As Table 2 demonstrates, populations in cities of at least 100,000 make up a majority in only one state. Populations in cities of at least 250,000 do not make up a majority in a *single* state; furthermore, the Democratic partisanship of most of these cities means the urban Republican vote is an even smaller percentage of the state total.

Table 2. Urban Population Rankings by State

State	% Pop. In cities ≥100,000		State	% Pop. In Cities ≥250,000
DC	100.0		DC	100.0
AZ	62.0		NY	43.7
NV	47.5		AZ	43.0
NY	46.7		AK	41.5
CA	45.9		TX	31.9
TX	43.3		HI	30.7
AK	41.5		CO	27.7
CO	40.9		CA	27.2
NE	36.0		OK	26.1
HI	30.7		NM	24.7

This problem is compounded by the RNC delegate selection rules, which lead to most states using a winner-take-all system to select convention delegates. While minority blocs of Democratic primary voters are often able to choose some delegates (although usually significantly fewer than their actual vote totals due to unpledged delegates and superdelegates), minority blocs of Republican primary voters are usually shut out by the plurality in each state, as 100% of a state's delegates go to whichever candidate wins the increasingly common winner-take-all nomination contests.

[4] District of Columbia Republican Committee at http://www.dcgop.com/About/Default.aspx?SectionId=412.

Washington, D.C. Voters in the Nomination Process

Raising awareness of the District's lack of Congressional representation continues to be the primary motivation behind the push for the District's first-in-the-nation primary. However, this is not the only reason the District needs to consider primary reform. The District of Columbia, like many small states, is severely limited in the influence it can have in the presidential nomination process. With very small numbers of delegates, the only way for small states to influence the party nominations is by going early in the primary process and providing candidates with early momentum and national media attention.

The ability of small states to hold an advantageous early position in the nomination schedule is further limited by the traditional first-in-the-nation status of the New Hampshire primary and Iowa caucus. Democratic Party rules will not recognize primaries and caucuses that occur before the New Hampshire and Iowa events and the Republican Party has gone along with this scheduling rule. The schedule has become increasingly front-loaded, with more and more states moving their contests as close as possible to the Iowa caucus. All but the largest states have become almost irrelevant to the nomination process unless they have been able to move their primary near the front of the schedule.

A review of the numbers demonstrates the extent to which the District is left out of the nomination process. In the 1996 and 2000 Republican nomination contests and the 1992 Democratic contest, the District did not hold its nomination contest until after at least thirty states. In each of these elections, the states preceding the District contained more than 70% of the country's population. More importantly, each of these contests took place long after the Super Tuesday primaries had effectively guaranteed one candidate the party's nomination.

The extremely low rates of participation across the country are reflective of the negligible amount of influence that late primaries have on the nomination process. In the 2000 Republican nomination process, overall turnout in states holding presidential primaries was 13.3% of eligible voters through Super Tuesday and only 7.0% afterward.[5] This trend was mirrored on the Democratic side, with 8.2% of eligible voters turning out through Super Tuesday and 6.8% turning out afterward. Overall, turnout was 22.9% through Super Tuesday and dropped to 14.0% afterward.

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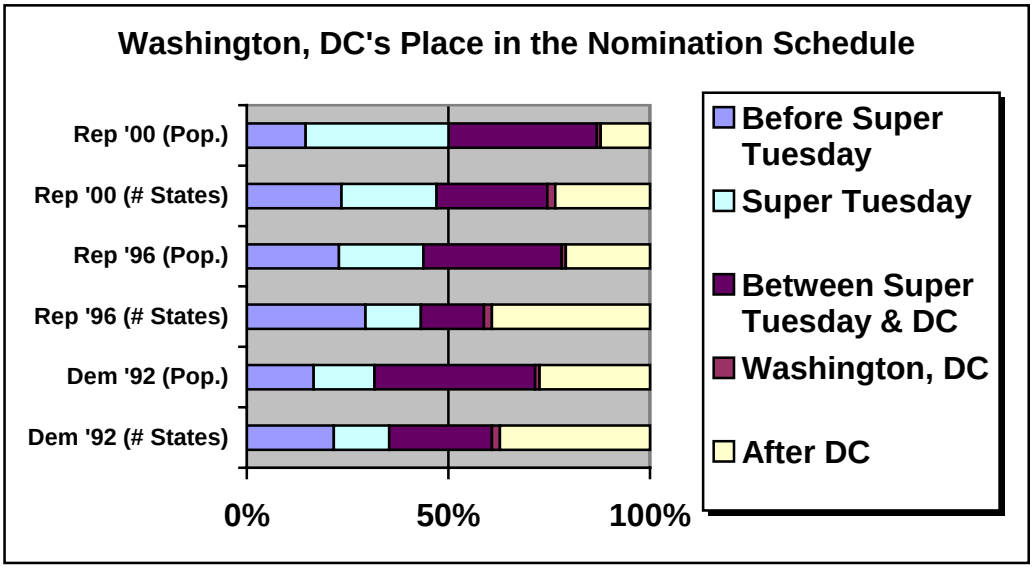
[5] "Frontloading, Progressive Disengagement Creates Second Lowest Primary Turnout," *Committee for the Study of the American Electorate*, August 31, 2000.

Figure 1. Washington, D.C.'s Place in the Nomination Schedule



The District's position in the nomination calendar is one method of looking at its influence in the nomination process. Another approach is to look at how closely District voters' primary preferences correspond with the eventual party nominations. Although the District clearly does not play a significant role in choosing nominees, this problem is compounded if District voters do not support the eventual nominee.

On the Republican side, primary results from the District are similar to national totals (primary elections only – caucus results not considered).[6] However, it is difficult to determine how accurately these results represent the true preferences of District Republicans because both of these primaries took place after a candidate had effectively secured the nomination. It is likely that most states that hold primaries after the nomination has been secured show greater support for the nominee than the national average. One could perhaps study primary turnout in these late primaries to get a better idea of whether there is actually strong support for a candidate or whether higher vote percentages for a candidate come from a small number of people coming out to show support for the eventual nominee. A competitive field of candidates would be the best way to determine accurate voter preference in the District primary.

The 1992 Democratic primary results in the District, with Bill Clinton performing more strongly than he did in the national totals, face the same problems discussed above regarding their usefulness in determining voter preference.[7] The 2004 results may be somewhat more instructive, although they also come with

[6] National results are available from the Federal Election Commission at http://www.fec.gov/pubrec/electionresults.shtml. Results for the District of Columbia are available from the Board of Elections and Ethics at http://www.dcboee.org/Information/er_index.shtm

[7] *Ibid.*

their own set of caveats. Gov. Howard Dean received over 40% of the votes in the District, with Rev. Al Sharpton, Ambassador Carol Moseley-Braun and Rep. Dennis Kucinich also doing much better than any of them did nationally. However, because the District chose to hold its primary before the opening of the Democratic primary window, the rest of the primary field, including Senators John Kerry and John Edwards, did not participate and were not on the ballot. The most concrete example of District voters having distinctly different primary preference than the national party is the 1988 Democratic primary. Eighty percent of District Democratic primary voters supported Rev. Jesse Jackson while the national party eventually nominated Gov. Michael Dukakis. Clearly this indicates that the Democratic primary schedule can leave black, urban voters with less influence than they would have with an early primary in the District.

[T]he District fits the profile of a women-friendly Congressional district.

Although a paucity of woman candidates has led to few opportunities for District voters to demonstrate a preference for female candidates, this is another potential issue on which the preferences of District voters and the majority of the electorate differ. According to research by Palmer and Simon for the book *Breaking the Glass Ceiling: Women and Congressional Elections,* the District fits the profile of a women-friendly Congressional district.[8] This profile is based on the District's aforementioned qualities of being entirely urban and having a large black population as well as having an above average percentage of residents with college degrees and low Republican presidential vote totals. Significantly, the best districts for women candidates are New York, San Francisco and Los Angeles, three of the urban areas whose limited influence in the nomination process is discussed in the previous section. Holding an early primary in the District could give voters across the country a chance to hear candidates weigh in on a set of women's issues that are not often raised in primaries in other states.

The District and Existing Reform Proposals Under Discussion[9]

This section reviews the role of the District in various proposals for reform of the presidential primary calendar, starting with potential changes in 2008. Brief summaries of each proposal are followed by an analysis of their impact on the District.

"Pre-Window" Additions: The DNC's Commission on Presidential Nomination Timing and Scheduling recommended both examining comprehensive reform in the long-term and immediate action for 2008. Under current DNC rules, states must hold their primaries and caucuses within a four-month window. Two exceptions are made to this rule: Iowa is allowed to hold its caucus two weeks before the window opens and New Hampshire is allowed to hold its primary one week prior to the window. The Commission recommends moving one or two additional caucuses into the week between Iowa and New

[8] The index of women-friendly Congressional districts can be found at http://smu.edu/smunews/womenincongress/best-worst-10.asp.

[9] For more information on these reforms, visit FairVote's Presidential Election Reform program at www.fairvote.org/presidential.

Hampshire and one or two additional caucuses into the week between New Hampshire and the rest of the field.

On April 22nd, 2006, nine states and the District of Columbia made their cases for one of these early primaries at the DNC Rules and Bylaws Committee meeting in New Orleans. Many of these states would add missing diversity to the nomination process, particularly in terms of geography (most of the applicant states are southern or western) and race. Many southern states have Democratic electorates with significant percentages of black voters, while several western states have significant Latino populations, an emerging voting bloc closely courted by both parties. But as this report demonstrates, no state comes close to the District in providing real balance to Iowa and New Hampshire's heavily rural nature.

Table 3. Black and Urban Comparison among "Pre-Window" Candidates

State	% Black	% of Black Pop. in Cities 100,000	Black Pop. In Cities as % of State Pop.
District of Columbia	60.0	100.0	60.0
Mississippi	36.3	17.8	6.5
South Carolina	29.5	4.5	1.3
Alabama	26.0	36.2	9.4
Arkansas	15.7	17.6	2.8
Michigan	14.2	65.6	9.3
Nevada	6.8	89.3	6.1
Colorado	3.8	79.6	3.0
West Virginia	3.2	0.0	0.0
Arizona	3.1	81.0	2.5

Delaware Plan: This plan was nearly adopted by the RNC in 2000. Under the Delaware Plan, the states would be put into four groups according to population. The smallest 12 states, plus federal territories, would vote first, followed by the next smallest 13 states, then the 13 medium-sized states, and finally the 12 largest states. These four consolidated primaries would occur on the first Tuesday of each month, beginning in March and ending in June.

Table 4. Delaware Plan Nomination Schedule

Round 1	Round 2	Round 3	Round 4
Wyoming	Nebraska	South Carolina	Virginia
Vermont	West Virginia	Louisiana	North Carolina
North Dakota	New Mexico	Alabama	New Jersey
Alaska	Nevada	Colorado	Georgia
South Dakota	Utah	Minnesota	Michigan
Delaware	Kansas	Wisconsin	Ohio
Montana	Arkansas	Maryland	Pennsylvania
Rhode Island	Mississippi	Missouri	Illinois
Hawaii	Iowa	Arizona	Florida
New Hampshire	Connecticut	Tennessee	New York
Maine	Oklahoma	Indiana	Texas
Idaho	Oregon	Washington	California
District of Columbia	Kentucky	Massachusetts	
Territories			

Regional Primary System: The National Association of Secretaries of State has endorsed the idea of a revolving regional primary system. Like the Delaware Plan, four consolidated primaries would be held with a month separating each one. New Hampshire and Iowa would retain their first-in-the-nation status. Unlike the Delaware Plan, these four consolidated primaries would be based on geographic region instead of state size. The order of regional contests would rotate each election cycle.

Table 5. Regional Plan Nomination Schedule

East	South	Midwest	West
Connecticut	Alabama	Illinois	Alaska
Delaware	Arkansas	Indiana	Arizona
Maine	Florida	Kansas	California
Maryland	Georgia	Michigan	Colorado
Massachusetts	Kentucky	Minnesota	Hawaii
New Jersey	Louisiana	Missouri	Idaho
New York	Mississippi	Nebraska	Montana
Pennsylvania	North Carolina	North Dakota	Nevada
Rhode Island	Oklahoma	Ohio	New Mexico
Vermont	South Carolina	South Dakota	Oregon
West Virginia	Tennessee	Wisconsin	Utah
District of Columbia	Texas		Washington
	Virginia		Wyoming
	Puerto Rico		Guam
	Virgin Islands		

The American Plan: The Graduated Random Presidential Primary System, or the American Plan, features a schedule consisting of ten intervals, generally of two weeks, during which randomly selected states may hold their primaries. In the first interval, states with a combined total of eight congressional districts would hold their primaries, caucuses, or conventions. This is approximately equal to the total number of congressional districts in Iowa (5) and New Hampshire (2). Any state or combination of states amounting to a total of eight congressional districts could be in the first round of primaries and caucuses. The District of Columbia, Guam, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands, which also send delegates to both national conventions, are each counted as one district in this system.

In the second period, two weeks later, the eligibility number would increase to 16 (8 x 2). In the baseline design of the American Plan, every two weeks, the combined size of the contests would grow by eight congressional districts, until a combination of states totaling 80 congressional seats (8 x 10) – nearly one-fifth of the total – would be up for grabs in the tenth and last interval toward the end of June.

Because our biggest states are much more populous than the other states, this baseline design would allow California, which has 53 districts, to vote no earlier than the seventh interval, in which the eligibility number is 56 (8 x 7). To put California on equal footing with the other populous states, the order of Rounds 4 through 10 is staggered: 8, 16, 24, 56, 32, 64, 40, 72, 48, 80. With this adjustment, the four most populous states are all eligible to vote by the fourth of ten rounds.

Table 6. American Plan Primary Schedule

Two-Week Intervals	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
Total Congressional Districts	8	16	24	56	32	64	40	72	48	80

- *33 States plus D.C. and the Territories are eligible to be selected for first round primaries*
- *California, the largest state, is eligible to hold its primary as soon as the fourth round*

Impact of These Plans on Washington, D.C.

The District would fare best under either the American Plan or a modified form of the Delaware plan. The regional primary plan would be far more problematic. In the short-term, the District's best opportunity for influence is for the Democratic National Committee to select it for one of its early nomination contests.

The Regional Primary Plan would put the District into the first primary group only once every four presidential election cycles (16 years). But even in years when the District's region is first on the schedule, the District faces a number of obstacles to holding a meaningful and competitive primary. First, the District would be competing with eleven states for attention from candidates during the

limited amount of time before the East regional primary. Although this region does include some small states such as Vermont and New Hampshire, it also includes the large states of New York and Pennsylvania. The District actually faces the problems of both small and large states when trying to attract candidates; like the small states, a win in the District yields fewer delegates for a candidate than a win in a large state; like the large states, campaign costs in the District may be higher than elsewhere due its location in a major media market. With New Hampshire and Iowa still having the power to determine the frontrunners, important candidates might be eliminated even before the first regional primary.

Secondly, being in the first regional primary once every sixteen years could potentially have unintended partisan consequences for primary voters in the District. If consecutive cycles with the East regional primary leading the schedule feature an incumbent president from the same party, voters from that party could have to wait 32 years between first slot primaries with a competitive field of candidates.

From the District's perspective, the Delaware Plan is significantly more advantageous than the Regional Primary system. The District primary would be on the first consolidated primary date each election cycle and it would not have to compete with any large states; however, it would be competing for attention with states from all across the country. The Delaware Plan effectively creates four campaigns that are national in geographic scope. Many candidates will not have the resources to contest every primary or caucus in four campaigns of this scope and will be forced to focus on a smaller number of states in each round. Given the current partisanship of the states in the first group, the District would probably be a strong draw for Democratic candidates. Republican candidates might be more likely to focus on the western red states such as Wyoming, Idaho, Montana and the Dakotas.

The DNC Pre-Window addition plan does the least of any of these plans to reform the nomination schedule; for the few states that are awarded pre-window slots, however, this would clearly be the most advantageous option. The District should certainly build a case using its unique characteristics discussed in the previous section to advocate for one of these spots in the 2008 schedule. The obvious drawback to this plan is that it helps only the few states that are given pre-window slots. Regardless of which states are given these spots in 2008, it is likely that many of the remaining states will advocate for either adopting a more holistic reform plan for subsequent election cycles or at least rotating other states into the early slots; therefore, even if the District does secure one of the early slots for the next election cycle, there is no guarantee that it would be able to retain this place after 2008. For this reason, the District would be best served by pushing for an early spot in 2008 while at the same time advocating for one of the more comprehensive reform options.

Under the American Plan, the District would be eligible to be selected for a first round primary. Although the random nature of this plan means that the District could possibly end up in any round, the District and all states with a single Congressional seat would on average hold their primaries before 67.5% of the population. The District would be well positioned to often vote early in the

presidential calendar, and, when that was the case, at a time when only a handful of other contests were taking place.

With only 11% of the American electorate voting in the first three rounds, primaries in the District and small states could have a significant impact on the nomination process in the fourth and fifth rounds. Furthermore, the ten round random primary system means many rounds will have only a few states competing for candidate attention instead of the twelve or thirteen under the Delaware and Regional Plan consolidated schedules. Knowing that a District primary anywhere in the first five rounds could be important would also add an incentive for candidates already in the District (i.e. Senators, Representatives and Vice-Presidents) to make campaign appearances even in rounds prior to the round in which the District will hold its primary.

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Conclusion

Reforming the nomination schedule needs to be a priority for both parties. With each election cycle, the presidential general election becomes focused on fewer and fewer battleground states, leaving a large majority of Americans with little say in our biggest election. The parties need to prevent the same thing from happening with the nomination processes. It is a challenging task, but leaders in both the Republican and Democratic parties must work together to build a process that is both inclusive and able to select effective candidates for the general election.

The DNC "pre-window" option is only the first step in a primary reform process that will need to focus on 2012 and beyond. Although it is an important step, it is unfortunately only able to help a very small number of states directly. Therefore, the DNC should select states that are able to represent the constituencies that will not have a vote early in the 2008 nomination process. As two of the Democratic Party's most loyal constituencies, the preferences of black and urban voters should be represented in at least one early primary. The District of Columbia presents the best opportunity to give these constituencies a meaningful voice.

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