

**PRESENTATION OF REPUBLICAN STATE COMMITTEE
TO THE JOINT HEARING OF THE SENATE
REPUBLICAN AND DEMOCRATIC POLICY
COMMITTEES**

On behalf of the entire Republican State Committee of Pennsylvania I would like to thank the members of the Senate Republican and Democratic Policy Committees for the opportunity to speak about the issue of moving-up the date of the presidential primary election in Pennsylvania.

I understand that the Republican and Democratic Policy Committees may have an interest in following the path of other states, and that some of your colleagues may be considering putting legislation forward that would move our presidential primary to early February or March. First of all, I want you all to know that I am adamantly opposed to moving the primary to an earlier date.

Remember, there are numerous reasons that the state legislature has not rushed to join the competition of calendar leapfrog that is currently happening in some of our neighboring states. To date several states, including California, New York, New Jersey, and Illinois, have or are going to be entertaining the idea of moving their primaries forward to February 5th. These states will make up what has been commonly referred as the new 'Super Tuesday.'

A newly formed 'Super Tuesday' primary would be nothing more than a beauty contest. Some strongly suggest that it places a much greater significance on name identification and early fundraising, giving those candidates who are already well-known or who are able to raise the most amount of money in the shortest amount of time, a tremendous advantage. It puts a premium on big names and big money and could hinder candidates with smaller campaign coffers from connecting with voters in the way primaries

were intended. When you think about it, the big states, like California, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York, have been irrelevant in the General Election in recent election cycles. Presidential candidates from both parties ignore these states because they have been consistently voting Democrat. They are only relevant in a primary. The action in next year's General Election will be in Ohio and Pennsylvania, the true swing states. We have 21 electoral votes and cannot be ignored by any presidential candidate that hopes to end up in the White House. I believe that Pennsylvanians will not only have a voice in the selection of a candidate for President – They will probably select the winner!

Another concern we have about moving the primary into February is the increased potential of a significant snowstorm hitting us on a primary election day. A snowstorm, similar to the one we suffered from this past Valentine's Day, would seriously suppress voter turnout. With an older electorate, do we really want

to force our voters out to vote during conditions that could jeopardize their health and safety?

Perhaps one of the biggest complaints surrounding the debate about moving to an earlier primary is the fact that it would force our Republican and Democratic State Committee Members and grassroots volunteers to circulate petitions during the holiday season. Depending upon when petitions would have to be circulated and filed, our Party may have issues about circulating and filing petitions only days after the busy November municipal elections. Also, it would mean that State and County employees would have to engage in the nomination petition process during the holiday season and if there are any challenges to the petitions, the courts of this Commonwealth and their staffs would also have to make room on their dockets for these cases, again during the holiday season.

Furthermore, a contested or heated primary battle, depending upon how early that fight would begin, would take attention and funds away from the important odd-year municipal elections, like the judicial or commissioner races this year. Remember that there are hundreds of local elections on November 6th. An earlier primary would mean that all of our state representatives, half of the senate, each congressmen, and the state row offices would be voted on within three months time of our busy Municipal Election Cycle.

Another concern I have is whether or not moving the primary election to an earlier date would contradict the reform efforts moving through the legislature and our Party structure. Some in our Party believe that moving the primary date forward is an effort to implement an incumbent protection safeguard. It is our Party's belief that an early primary would leave less time for candidate organizations to mobilize the petition process and candidate selection/endorsement. Additionally, an earlier primary election date would extend the General Election Cycle by two to

three months, which would increase the costs of running a campaign.

One option I have heard is to have Pennsylvania separate the presidential primary from the rest of the state elections, which in 2008, consists of statewide row offices, congressional and state legislature races. Holding a separate primary for the office of President raises a number of concerns. An important question to consider is whether a bifurcated primary would suppress turnout for the other statewide and local offices that normally accompany the presidential candidates on the ballot. Low voter turnout is a problem confronted by Republicans and Democrats alike. Furthermore, a bifurcated primary is an enormous waste of valuable taxpayer dollars. In 2000, the Joint State Government Commission issued a report that determined "multiple primaries lead to increased expense and heavy administrative burdens." Recent reports indicate that holding a primary election costs more than \$15 million statewide. We feel that bifurcating the

presidential primary from the rest of the offices down the ballot presents a financial burden to the counties and the Commonwealth, and potentially could depress voter participation for other offices. Thus, we are adamantly opposed to a bifurcated primary.

Our Pennsylvania delegates also run as non-committed delegates, and therefore, an early primary would not necessarily mean that all of Pennsylvania's delegates would be supporting a specific candidate. There is no National Party Rule or provision in the PA Republican State Committee By-Laws that would force our delegates to stay committed to one candidate throughout the entire process.

An earlier primary date could also conflict with the endorsement of our statewide candidates. As many of you know, Republican State Committee of Pennsylvania conduct three annual meetings, one in the winter, summer and fall. I believe the Democratic State Committee operates under a similar schedule.

Our Winter Meeting is typically highlighted by the endorsement of Republican candidates running for statewide office. Candidates work hard and depend on that endorsement to help get them on the ballot. To ensure that the Committee will be able to endorse its candidates before the primary, we would have to move our Winter Committee meeting to an earlier date. A primary in early February would mean that our Winter Committee Meeting would most likely have to take place somewhere between the November Election Day and New Years Day. Finding a date and location that would accommodate our almost four hundred members would be a monumental task, especially considering one's family obligations during the holiday season. Our Committee may also have issues finding a suitable location available during the holiday season to accommodate an event of our size. In addition, our regional caucuses usually arrange meetings with their members to hear from and discuss the candidates seeking our Party's statewide endorsement. Straw polls are typically conducted at these meetings to give each candidate an idea of what kind of support

they can expect at our winter meeting. With the time constraints put upon us by an early primary, we would have a difficult time arranging these meetings between a busy municipal election and a Winter State Committee Meeting.

As most of you know, our Party elects delegates to the Republican National Convention on the Presidential year's Primary Election Day. In large part, we are governed by the Rules of the Republican Party as adopted by the 2004 Republican National Convention, and, those Rules dictate how many delegates we are allowed to send. National Party Rules also give the state and state parties deadlines and time frames for when specific rule changes and primary dates must be established. Specifically, Rule 15 of the RNC By-Laws defines next year's open primary season, which is the time period we must elect our delegates or risk a potential loss of delegates, as any time between February 5th and July 28th, 2008. If we were to move-up the primary and elect delegates before the first Tuesday in February, according to Rule

16 of the National Party Rules our state party would forfeit 50% of the number of delegates we would be able to send to the National Convention.

In addition, National Party Rule 15 stipulates that a state party must identify their selection process by September 4, 2007, a year before the National Convention. If we were to submit a rule change after that deadline would be in violation of that Rule.

I am strongly against moving the presidential primary to an earlier date. I want you all to know that I did not make this decision on my own. After discussing the issue with many Party leaders, we have collectively decided that an earlier primary is not in the best interests of the voters of Pennsylvania.

So in conclusion, I would again like to thank the members of the Republican and Democratic Senate Policy Committees for allowing me the opportunity to speak to this issue. I truly believe

that Pennsylvanians would be better served keeping our primary in April. Pennsylvania can play a determinative role in our nation's next President by delivering all 21 electoral votes. Thank you.