

**TESTIMONY BEFORE JOINT SENATE COMMITTEE  
On Moving the Pennsylvania Primary  
Tuesday, March 13, 2007**

*Abraham Amorós  
Political and Communications Director  
Pennsylvania Democratic Party*

**Good morning and thanks to all of you for the opportunity to provide testimony on the possibility of moving the Pennsylvania primary during the 2008 presidential election.**

**My name is Abe Amorós and I am the Political and Communications Director for the Pennsylvania Democratic Party. I bring you greetings from our chairman, T.J. Rooney who is unable to be present due to previous commitments in Washington.**

**I am here to express the Democratic Party of Pennsylvania's views on the presidential election and the possibility of moving up the primary. Please know that my remarks will not stray very far from the testimony provided by then Executive Director Don Morabito who spoke during a hearing held by the Pennsylvania Election Reform Task**

**Force, chaired by Secretary of the Commonwealth, the honorable Pedro A. Cortés on February 17, 2005.**

**Let me begin by stating that the Democratic Party of Pennsylvania favors an earlier primary in hopes of making the state more relevant to in a presidential election. The Party echoes the sentiments of Governor Rendell in this respect. Many voters have already expressed their dismay in not having an effective voice during a presidential primary. Of course, this is largely due to other states already having weighed in on their selections. And since campaigns are all about organized people and organized money, it is imperative that the electorate be allowed to weigh in heavily in terms of selecting the next leader of the free world.**

**As you know, these primaries receive a tremendous amount of national attention that have the capacity to push candidates to one extreme or the other in order to curry the favor of the most loyal partisans in either party. As a result, Pennsylvania primaries have had a tendency to have low and unimpressive turnouts that lead to continued cynicism and lack of participation. In 2004, for example, 25**

**percent of eligible Democrats came to the polls compared to 28 percent of all eligible Republicans.**

**Regrettably, Pennsylvania voters have not had a significant impact on a presidential primary election since 1976. Unless something is done, voter apathy and a low turnout will continue.**

**In addition, Pennsylvania's feeling of "irrelevance" is further compounded by other states already having moved their primaries closer to beginning of the calendar year.**

**No fewer than 33 states hold their presidential primaries before the end of March. And while that constitutes a tremendous amount of travel and organization for those seeking the most powerful post in the world, it affords Pennsylvania and its electorate the significance that it truly deserves.**

**With 21 electoral votes, Pennsylvania has the capacity to provide a tremendous amount of influence. This is particularly important when you consider how the 2008 race will feature a truly wide-open race given**

**that no incumbent will be running for re-election for the first time since 1952. And with estimates of a presidential race possibly costing more than \$1 billion combined, it will undoubtedly provide a much-desired economic benefit to the Keystone State.**

**History has also shown that Pennsylvania remains a swing state that is also considered to be battleground territory for candidates of both parties. Each presidential election cycle places us in the top dozen targeted states.**

**In total, consider that in 2004 the Bush and Kerry campaigns visited Pennsylvania more than 80 times. We are also a rich mixture of voting constituencies that include urban areas, large suburban populations and even places where wildlife actually outnumber inhabitants. In addition, we have a rich mixture of seniors, younger voters, Latinos, African-Americans, Italian-Americans and other groups that have definitive opinions on those that are elected to represent them.**

**Since we are considered to be a highly competitive swing state, neither party has the luxury of taking Pennsylvania for granted.**

**Other reasons exist for moving the primary forward. While the campaign takes place within our borders, Pennsylvanians will be able to influence policy positions on matters such as health care, manufacturing, agriculture, elderly issues and those affecting our challenged cities. With all due respect to our friends in Iowa and New Hampshire, the diversity of issues and policy statements are not as encompassing.**

**In addition, the flurry of activity during these races will also stimulate party involvement on both sides. No one can argue that the 2004 presidential election provided the greatest amount of interest in recent memory based upon current events and the importance of the election. Next year will be no different since it will be a wide-open race. During the February hearing in 2005, Mr. Morabito testified to both parties relying on the services and input of no fewer than 200,000 volunteers on the campaign trail, nearly twice the size of a Saturday afternoon in Beaver Stadium at Penn State.**

**It is also important for us to discuss the concerns raised by moving the primary up. Yes, we are very aware of the difficulties associated with circulating petitions and, yes, we are aware of the “fatigue” argument that comes along with having to hit the ground running right after the 2007 general election.**

**Since we largely function through the good works of our counties, it would force many local parties to get their process in line much earlier and become more organized. Does this answer satisfy everyone? Of course not. But the reality is that for there will be a price to pay for making Pennsylvania more relevant in the process. Also keep in mind that those coming off a general election in November 2007 will also be disposed to continuing any momentum that may have been gained or may even be more encouraged to work harder for a better result.**

**We feel that moving the primary to an earlier date has capacity to make us stronger. In addition, let me say that we are wonderfully encouraged by the influx of young people that have demonstrated their desire to provide the necessary brainpower and legwork to make things**

**happen. Young people are once again beginning to have a say in Party politics in Pennsylvania on both sides.**

**I'd like to thank this panel for allowing us to testify before you in hopes of furthering this concept. We – along with Governor Rendell – believe very strongly that voters should have an opportunity to have their voices heard in an incredibly important election in what can be argued as one of the most critical times in our nation's history.**

**I will be pleased to answer any questions that you may have.**

**###**