

# Primary Gathers Strength

Editorial from The Sun (Bremerton, Wash.)  
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You can expect to be expressing your choice of presidential nominees at the polls next time around.

After years of opposition to the notion of a presidential primary in Washington, the state Democratic Party has quit fighting it and the state Republicans seem almost as a resigned.

Those have been the two most ardent foes of an idea whose time seems to have come.

The state Legislature soon should have before it a measure that would create a presidential primary on the same day as Oregon's, beginning in 1992.

The measure, an initiative on which 202,872 signatures were gathered last fall, is in the hands of the Secretary of State's office, which is quietly rooting for it while making sure at least 151,133 of the signatures are valid. There's little question it will pass that test.

Then the Legislature will have the option of adopting the initiative, in which case it becomes law; ignoring it, in which case it goes to the voters in the fall; or modifying it, in which case both the original and the modification go to the voters.

The success last year of the Pat Robertson forces in this state's caucuses seems to robbed the caucus system of much of its support. It illustrated how a committed minority can take advantage of a complacent majority and distort the political position of the state.

A presidential primary still may place the choice in the hands of a minority, given usual springtime voter turnouts, but it will be a much larger cross-section of the populace that turns out for the caucuses.

One facet of the initiative will take some getting used to for longtime Washington state residents, in that it requires a person to use either a Republican ballot or a Democratic ballot, in essence affiliating for at least that night with that party. As common as that is other states, it's new here.

The reasoning is that the process leads to the choosing of a candidate in a national convention, so the voter must participate for one party or the other. Anyway, caucus selection requires the same choice – you go to the caucus of one party or the other.

There's little to object to in establishing a presidential primary here – other than the price. It will cost about a million dollars every four years, as opposed to minimal cost to the taxpayers to stage the party caucuses. (The caucuses will still be held – that's where convention delegates will be chosen and party platforms formulated.)

On the upside, a primary will give more people a say in the selection process, make having that say more convenient, better reflect the voters' collective wishes as to the presidential candidates, and make personal campaign appearances in the Northwest more convenient for the candidates. Junior, taxing districts, which put money measures on the ballot in the spring, can reduce the cost of their elections and ensure better turnout by choosing the day of the primary – the fourth Tuesday and May – for their vote.

The existing state primary in which the field of state and local candidates trimmed to two per race would be unaffected. Its September date is set in the state constitution and can't be changed by initiative.

Joe Murphy of Tracyton, a former Democratic state chairman, has teamed with former GOP state boss Ross Davis, in heading up the initiative campaign. Though Secretary Of State Ralph Munro, a Bainbridge Island Republican, must remain ostensibly neutral while his office decides the sufficiency of the initiative signatures, he has long argued for a primary in this state.

It's time for Washington state to join the growing number of states nominating presidential candidates at the polls. The initiative should be approved.

## Opinion

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**When an opinion is not shared** by most people, it is not an opinion at all. It is a mere whim or a passing fancy.

#### Who are you and why

**Who are you and why** are you in this position? This is a question that every person should ask themselves.



ANNE McFARLAND



THEODORE ROBERTSON