

THE FRONTLOADING OF PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES AND CAUCUSES FROM THE
STATES' PERSPECTIVE

by

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(Under the Direction of Paul-Henri Gurian)

ABSTRACT

In the years since the McGovern-Fraser reforms fundamentally reshaped the presidential nomination process, a trend toward the early scheduling of presidential primaries and caucuses emerged. This frontloading phenomenon has led to nominations being decided earlier and earlier as states moved to have an influence over the process. While the motivation for this movement has been established in the extant literature, nothing has attempted to explain why some states are better able to shift the dates on which their delegate selection event. This research will seek to explain not only what separates states in this regard but also show, using a series of time series cross-sectional logistic regression models; that political and structural factors have a larger impact on obstructing some states from moving their primaries and caucuses than states simply being motivated to move.

INDEX WORDS: presidential primaries, caucuses, frontloading, presidential nominations, concurrent primaries, divided government

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Chapter 1. Introduction: Frontloading from the States' Perspective

Should we move up? Should we stay put? Those are two of the questions that have faced states since the McGovern-Fraser reforms fundamentally restructured the methods by which the two major parties' presidential nominees are chosen during the final presidential election cycle of the 1960s. Part of the outcome of that process has been an irregular lurch forward over time as states began shifting their delegate selection contests as a means of influencing the nominations. Though there has been some ebb and flow to the movement from state to state in the cycles since, the product has been a compressed calendar of delegate selection events with a majority of primaries and caucuses at the very beginning of the presidential election year. That collective movement over time and the byproducts are together what has come to be known as frontloading

All states, however, are not created equal in terms of frontloading. In fact, in the presidential nomination process, those states scheduled at the front end of the calendar are better able to have a noticeable impact on the outcome of the nomination race. Though the motivation to hold a contest early may be present across states, the desire and/or ability to reschedule those primaries or caucuses on a more advantageous date is not uniformly distributed across the fifty states. Why is it, then, that some states have shifted to earlier dates over the last four decades of presidential election cycles and others have either not moved at all or have moved temporarily only to move back to the original [later] date in a subsequent cycle? That is the question this research intends to explain.

To this point, the literature regarding frontloading has established the motivation states have to move to earlier dates from a national perspective (Mayer and Busch 2004). Yet, that fails to explain the action from the level at which it is occurring, the state level. This research not only continues the shift in focus toward the state-level decision makers charged with scheduling

a state's primary or caucus, but also broadens the scope of factors affecting that decision. Most importantly, while the extant literature establishes the pattern of motivation, it misses the deterrents that separate the states that can and do move from those that either cannot or do not shift the dates on which their delegate selection events are held. That more dynamic explanation of the frontloading process places particular import on the relationship between the state-level frontloading decision makers and the national parties in terms of the rules governing delegate selection. Given the Florida and Michigan situation that confronted the Democratic Party during the 2008 election cycle, establishing the extent of that relationship could have far-reaching implications in not only future cycles, but in future research.

This dynamic theory of the frontloading decision-making process hinges on the notion of rationally-acting state actors weighing the costs and benefits of making a change to the date on which the state's primary or caucus is held. If the incentives are sufficiently high, a state will be more likely to move. However, if the deterrents (structural and political) outweigh those benefits, a state will be more likely to stand pat and not change the existing law. The interplay of the costs and benefits are best typified by the decisions made in Georgia, North Carolina and South Carolina during the post-reform era. Despite being a limited sample of the full array of issues attendant to the frontloading decision, these three states serve as a microcosm of the basic types of movement witnessed throughout this period and provide an example of the impetus behind some of the frontloading decisions made over the last ten cycles.

North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia all share a border, yet have dealt with the timing of their presidential delegate selection events in very different ways. All three faced some motivation, if not pressure, to align the dates on which their contests were held given the push across the South during the late 1970s and into the 1980s to establish a southern regional

primary. Yet, all three states pursued different strategies for complying with national Democratic Party rules and ultimately determining the dates on which their delegate selection events would be held. Outside of those regional forces, it was the set of obstacles – not motivating factors – that helped or hindered each of those states from freely moving its delegate selection event.

During the 1976 cycle, North Carolina scheduled its primary in late March – an early date within the first four weeks of the process after New Hampshire. Despite the primary having kept Ronald Reagan in the race for the Republican nomination against Gerald Ford in 1976, the Old North State – or its Democratic-controlled state legislature – moved its primary for 1980 to May, coupled with the state's primaries for state and local offices. Establishing that bond between the presidential contest and those for state and local offices would prove prohibitive to primary movement in future cycles. The effect that had was to force on the decision makers in the North Carolina in every cycle in which the two primary types were held concurrently to make a handful of decisions regarding frontloading. First, would the state move its primary to an earlier date? If not, there was no change, but if the decision to move was made, there was an additional layer to consider. The first option is to sever the bond between the presidential primary and the primaries for state and local offices and move the newly created presidential primary to an earlier position. State actors in North Carolina also could have moved the concurrent set of primaries to an earlier date. The catch there is that both options come with costs. The former requires the funding of a new election, while the latter could hurt the fortunes of candidates in down-ballot races in terms of tradition and turnout.

The story during the same period in Georgia and South Carolina was altogether different. Both states held presidential contests that were separate from their nomination structures for state and local offices and continued to do so throughout the post-reform era. Simply because North

Carolina established that bond between the two levels of nominating contests, the state faced a barrier that Georgia and South Carolina never encountered. Namely, if the decision makers in the Tarheel State desired a change in the date on which its presidential primary was to be held, they faced the reality of having to fund an entirely new and separate election. The costs for North Carolina have proven, with the exception of the Southern Super Tuesday in 1988, prohibitive whether based on budgetary concerns or owing to the fact that more than one part of the existing election law required alteration. Not only did the date of the contest require some change, but the creation of a separate presidential primary had to be considered as well. Changing one section of the election code is one thing. Having to change multiple sections is another even without accounting for the partisan division within the legislature.

With later and separate primaries for state and local offices, Georgia and South Carolina avoided those hindrances when it came to shifting the date on which either state's presidential primary was scheduled. Each was free to shift its presidential primary without having to incur the start up costs of a new primary – as was the case in states like North Carolina – so long as the date was in compliance with the delegate selection rules of both national parties. And during the post-reform period, Georgia and South Carolina held contests that were after both Iowa and New Hampshire and within the party-designated windows of time in which contests could be scheduled.

This concept of split primaries, then, separates North Carolina from Georgia and South Carolina, but Georgia and South Carolina have been able to shift the dates on which their primaries or primary-caucuses were held via different means based on an additional set of rules on the state level. Georgia, like North Carolina, bestows the date-setting, decision-making power on the state government (the state legislature and the governor) while South Carolina leaves that

authority in the hands of the state-level Democratic and Republican parties working independently of each other. The Georgia/North Carolina model has become the most prevalent route to frontloading as primaries have proliferated in the time since the McGovern-Fraser reforms. However, due to the fact that the primary route – as opposed to the caucus or party-run primary route – entails the decision being filtered through the state government, partisan division within the government emerges as an obstacle in those states that is not present in party-run primary or caucus states (see Chapter 3). In other words, North Carolina has had the potential for multiple obstacles to frontloading, while Georgia faced only divided government (or having to move the decision through the multiple filters of the state government) and the national party limitations placed on it in terms of scheduling. South Carolina, meanwhile, was left to be something akin to a free agent in this process; limited only by the confines of the national parties' rules. Over time, this allowed South Carolina to emerge as the first Republican contest in the South and later as an early and exempt player in the Democratic races during the 2004 and 2008 cycles.

Despite sharing a border and many other similarities, on the issue of the frontloading decision, North Carolina, South Carolina and Georgia have had very different experiences in the post-reform era. The goal of this research is to demonstrate that this cost/benefit analysis applies across all states – not only simply to this subregional microcosm – and to fully explain the environment in which these decisions have been made in the time since the reform period began. It is theorized that the greater the number of obstacles to frontloading, the more a state's ability to move will be negatively impacted despite willingness to do so within a given state. In other words, there may be a desire to shift, but that desire is mitigated by a series of structural and political factors. If the path is rife with obstacles, the decision is likely to be delayed if not

completely abandoned. However, if the path to frontloading has minimal hurdles, the decision becomes a more viable option.

While this chapter has laid out the basic research question and introduced the cost-benefit analysis behind the frontloading decision, the next chapter will describe the evolution of frontloading during the post-reform era. Special attention will be paid to the proliferation of primaries in the face of reforms to the nomination system. In addition, the development of the motivation to hold earlier contests as a means of influencing the nomination outcomes will be detailed. Once that pattern was established, the primary calendar compressed in fits and starts over time depending on the cycle. One reality quickly emerged. The overall calendar constantly moved toward an earlier logjam of contests with far-reaching implications for how presidential nominees are selected.

With that pattern of movement and compression established, Chapter 3 will develop a theory of frontloading decision-making. The theory is based on the concept of a cost-benefit analysis. Rational state-level decision-making bodies construct the analysis given the obstacles and motivations that face the state. What are those obstacles, what are the motivating factors behind the frontloading move, and how do they collectively affect the likelihood of a primary or caucus shift? The higher the costs, the less likely a frontloading decision is to occur. In other words, the willingness to move may be present in a state (with its frontloading decision maker), but the costs of change may be significantly high as to obstruct a move to a more advantageous primary or caucus date.

To test that theory, Chapters 4 and 5 will focus on the frontloading decision among primary states first and then all states. The reasoning behind the separate analyses is that the decision-making calculus in primary states is altogether different from the decision in states with

either party-run primaries or caucuses. Owing to the fact that the frontloading decision in primary states has to be filtered through the state government, there are additional roadblocks that are not present in states where the state government is not the decision-making body charged with setting the date on which a state's delegate selection event is scheduled. States with party-run primaries or caucuses have a different set of decision makers – state parties – that do not encounter the same obstacles as those faced by primary state decision makers. Once the relationships between the obstacles/motivating forces and the frontloading decision in primary states have been tested, a full model encompassing all states – regardless of contest type – will be developed and relationships tested. Again, it is hypothesized that the frontloading moves that have been made since 1976, are a function of either a reduced number of obstacles or a heightened level of motivation facing a state in any given cycle.

Finally, Chapter 6 will tie both models together and discuss the implications of the results, placing them in the broader context of campaigns and elections and democratic theory. There will also be some attention devoted to looking toward the ways in which future research that could augment the findings herein.

The tale of frontloading, though, begins as an unintended consequence of a reform system that was intended to open the presidential nomination process up to a greater number of voters and to serve as a means of building the parties up from the grassroots. As has been shown repeatedly throughout much of the campaigns and elections literature, changing the rules changes the game (Norrandner 2000). The McGovern-Fraser reforms were no exception. Once the “earlier is better” motivation was established, the march to the front of the presidential nomination calendar was – in hindsight – nearly irreversibly underway.

Chapter 2. The Story Behind the Frontloading Phenomenon

The new rules governing presidential nominations that emerged from the 1968 Democratic convention certainly had the intent of fundamentally reshaping the process whereby presidential nominees were to be selected within the Democratic Party. However, while the intent of the McGovern-Fraser reforms was to get the process out of smoke-filled rooms and into the hands of rank-in-file Democrats, the means by which those ends were to be achieved were never clearly laid out. In such a context, unintended consequences typically become the order of the day. And the changes to the Democratic presidential nomination process – and by extension, at least over time, the Republican nomination – were no exception to this.

The intent of the reforms in the eyes of those crafting the changes was to open the nomination process up to all party members across the country through caucuses. Indeed, over forty years later, the grassroots party-building benefits of the caucus process were still being considered by the Democratic Party through its nomination rules exploratory group, the Democratic Change Commission. Again, though, there was a divide between what McGovern-Fraser envisioned and the means by which those goals were to be met. When the new rules took the ultimate nomination decision out of the hands of the party elite, the first consequence was that the process had become decentralized; that the party was ceding some control over the process in exchange for the feeling among its members that the party's nomination process was open, transparent and ultimately, legitimate. How that played out as the 1972 presidential nomination cycle approached, though, was that this decentralization occurred along lines that were very familiar to the history of the republic. Namely, what surfaced was a certain give and take between the national party and the fifty state parties, not unlike the constantly evolving system of federalism that has guided the United States since its founding.

This decentralization, then, opened up the nomination process to an additional set of decision-makers (the state parties), who in turn, had to determine the most efficient way(s) in which to implement and comply with the new rules handed down by the national party. The outcome was that state-level convenience often took precedence over any overarching, uniform application of the new nomination rules across states. Again, the intent of McGovern-Fraser was for there to be something of a proliferation of caucuses as a means of allocating delegates and determining the party's eventual presidential nominee. However, there was never any caucus requirement. The national party and its new rules left it up to the individual states to decide the best way for them to involve more Democratic voters in the nomination process.

For most states, that meant eschewing the caucus option based on purely economic concerns. Put very simply, the caucus option was never a cost-feasible route for the majority of states faced with having to comply with the Democratic National Committee's new rules governing presidential nominations. State parties looked at the landscape on which this decision had to be made and opted for the least cost-prohibitive avenue toward compliance. There were several options, but most state parties' decisions essentially rested on a two option axis: 1) set up a caucus and foot the bill or 2) utilize the preexisting primary election structure within the state as an overlapping means of allocating national convention delegates and thus determining the state's preference in the national nomination contest. Both met the goal of opening the process up to additional voters, but only the latter did so in a way that was more cost-effective when compared with the option at the other end of the spectrum. This opened the door not only to frontloading eventually, but also led to the proliferation of presidential primaries as the dominant method of delegate allocation over the subsequent four decades.

The only complicating factor in the state parties pulling this compliance-through-

primaries plan off was that that particular decision – to opt for a primary as a means of allocating delegates over a state party-funded caucuses did not rest with them, but with state legislatures charged with setting and maintaining any state's election laws. However, with most state legislatures controlled by the Democratic Party, the spread of the primaries as an alternative option was not as prohibitive as it might have been had the Republican Party been the one spearheading the new nomination initiatives. That was part of the equation.

The other side of this from the state parties' perspectives, was how much control they wanted to exert over the outcome of the delegate selection event – either primary or caucus – in their state. That level of control, as Meinke, et al. (2006) have shown, depends on how diverse any party's electoral base is in a state and how congruent said base is with the decision-making elites within the state party. More diversity among the party's voters and less congruence between that base and the elites lead a state party toward closing up the process, or at least limited the amount of participation as a way of dictating a certain electoral outcome (one that favored the state party's position). In other words, in states where this congruence was lacking, state parties would opt for caucuses. But the higher the level of congruence, the more likely a state party would be to establish a primary as the method of allocating national convention delegates. The primary is the more open option, but it is less threatening to a party where elite and mass-level ideology overlap to a high degree. Those states, then, where congruence was (or is) high would be the states that would also be more likely to take advantage of the cost-saving primary over a caucus. Quite to the contrary, though, state parties with elites and the mass level not on the same page ideologically would be more likely to value control of the outcome of the delegate selection event over the price tag the state party would face in the event it chose a caucus as its mode of delegate selection.

This, then, was the context into which state parties were thrust following the adoption of the McGovern-Fraser reforms by the Democratic Party. Each had to decide the best path to follow in terms of allocating their state's delegates in the presidential nomination process. Over time, that has meant more and more states going the primary route, but it has also triggered the frontloading phenomenon that has placed on states a certain structure that incentivized holding their delegate selection events on earlier dates.

That incentive structure took some time to develop, though. With the decision on the part of the Democratic Party to decentralize the nomination rules – ceding some of the rules-setting power to the states in the process – an evolutionary pattern that took an adjustment period to begin to fully materialize was triggered. Layered on top of that was the fact that there was a hierarchy of states whereby some were better able to move – or set earlier dates on the primary calendar – than others. As 1972 approached, then, the aforementioned state-level convenience took precedence over the McGovern-Fraser reform's attempts to open up access and to encourage participation through caucuses.

While some states certainly maintained their caucuses from previous cycles (when delegate allocation was not directly tied to primaries and caucuses), others opted for primaries as the mode of delegate allocation. Put very simply, it was easier. States with primary elections for state and local offices already established as the means of determining party nominees could add one more office to the ballot and come into compliance with the Democratic Party's new rules. The only catch was that different states had different state and local office primary dates than others. This was not an insurmountable roadblock, but it did provide some impediment to states freely deciding how they would best be able to comply with the McGovern-Fraser rules. With the national conventions still being held in their “traditional” July and August positions, a sizable

group of states obviously had a problem: their primaries for state and local office fell after the times in which the national conventions were held. In other words, for those states to have held concurrent primaries for state and local offices and the presidential nomination would have been tantamount to holding an election after the outcome had been determined.

Again, for obvious reasons, this was not an appealing option to the decision-makers in those states that fell into this category (with primaries after the conventions). After all, what was the point of allocating delegates after the nomination had been decided?¹ The decision-makers in those states, then, had to decide between holding concurrent primaries for all offices, but at an earlier time, or to continue to hold the primaries for state and local offices in the late summer while funding an all new presidential primary election earlier in the year. Most states – over half of which were in the northeast – chose the latter. The establishment of these split primaries (presidential versus state/local offices) would have significant ramifications for the entire presidential nomination process over the course of the subsequent four decades. Fronting the cost for and establishing the separate presidential primary election early in the period following the McGovern-Fraser reforms gave those states that complied with the Democratic Party's rules changes in that fashion a level of freedom for setting the date on which those delegate selection contests were held that other states did not possess in subsequent cycles. This, then, was the environment that faced state-level decision-makers as the 1972 presidential elections approached, and it was a set of factors that continued to affect the dates on which states held their presidential delegate selection events heading into the twenty-first century.

The Rise of the Frontloading Idea (1972-1976)

1 State legislators charged with making the changes to election laws such as those governing the date on which primaries were held also would have been hesitant to change these late summer dates. It would have affected their own reelection prospects potentially by altering their own primary dates – ones that had worked for them in the past.

In 1968 there were seventeen Democratic presidential primaries and sixteen Republican primaries (Busch and Mayer 2004) . Following the advent of the McGovern-Fraser reforms, there were 23 and 22 primaries between the two parties in 1972. That is not a fundamental sea change in the number of primaries that were held compared to caucuses across the two cycles, but it is indicative of the beginning of the evolution toward the primary becoming the dominant mode of delegate selection among the states. It demonstrates that an increased number of states were drawn to that method given that these contests – whether primary or caucus – were directly tied to the nomination of the party's presidential standard bearer. Instead of merely signaling the preferences of the primary or caucus voters of a state with the result being the potential for influencing the nomination, the new system on the Democratic side accomplished that but also removed the *potential*, making the outcome of the nomination dependent upon the outcome of the primary and caucus votes across the nation.

That may have served as the catalyst for some states shifting from caucuses to primaries in that interim period, but the ease of compliance with the new rules through primaries provided a model for other states to follow in subsequent cycles. Indeed, Norrander (2000) referred to the 1972 and 1976 cycles as an adjustment period after the rules changes; that states were not fully cognizant of and prepared to act within the new rules regime until the 1980 cycle. That said, after the first trial run in 1972, both the national, in this case, Democratic Party, and the state-level actors responsible for delegate selection event positioning saw a need for some changes. The Democratic National Committee was far less concerned at this point with the possibility of frontloading – it was not on the horizon – and were instead focused on the conditions under which delegates were being allocated. The mode was not the issue, but how delegates were being allocated within those primaries and caucuses were. There was a growing movement

within the Mikulski Commission – the McGovern-Fraser successor for the 1972-1976 period in the Democratic Party – away from winner-take-all allocation to a more proportional distribution of delegates.²

While that issue and a quota system assuring delegate diversity at the convention were the main concerns the national party faced between 1972 and 1976, state-level actors were beginning to see the potential for an “earlier is better” strategy for the positioning of delegate selection events. As Mayer and Busch point out, “Of the thirteen states that established new primaries in either 1972 or 1976, every one of them scheduled its primary in May or June.” This indicates that there was not any real active momentum behind the idea of frontloading. And while that may be the case, it was also during this period (1972-1976) that the seeds of that phenomenon were first planted. In fact, though, the Southern Super Tuesday idea did not come to fruition until the 1988 cycle, the notion of the South influencing the [Democratic] presidential nomination process early and establishing a Southern conservative as the candidate to beat had taken root as early as 1973. Then-Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter, in a speech before the Southern Governors Conference, called for a Southern regional presidential primary (Stanley and Hadley 1987). The goal of the move, as previously stated, was not to frontload the region's presidential nomination contests, but to affect the outcome of the Democratic nomination; to end up with an ideologically moderate candidate with a broader appeal in a general election. And though, the idea began floating around in the period between the 1972 and 1976 electoral cycles, little came of it until later.

2 This is an issue that is still in play after the 2008 cycle. The Democratic Change Commission – the group that spent 2009 examining the presidential nomination rules for the Democratic Party for the 2012 nomination– considered using a winner-take-all carrot to entice some states to move their primaries or caucuses to later dates on the nomination calendar (<http://frontloading.blogspot.com/2009/06/winner-take-all-democratic-primaries.html>). There is a discrepancy between the two parties on this winner-take-all point. The Republican Party has always left it up to the states to decide how to allocate their national convention delegates, whereas the Democrats have required a proportional allocation since 1976 (Ansolabehere and King 1990) with the exception of 1984 (Lengle 1987).

Presidential Primaries and Caucuses by Month (1976)

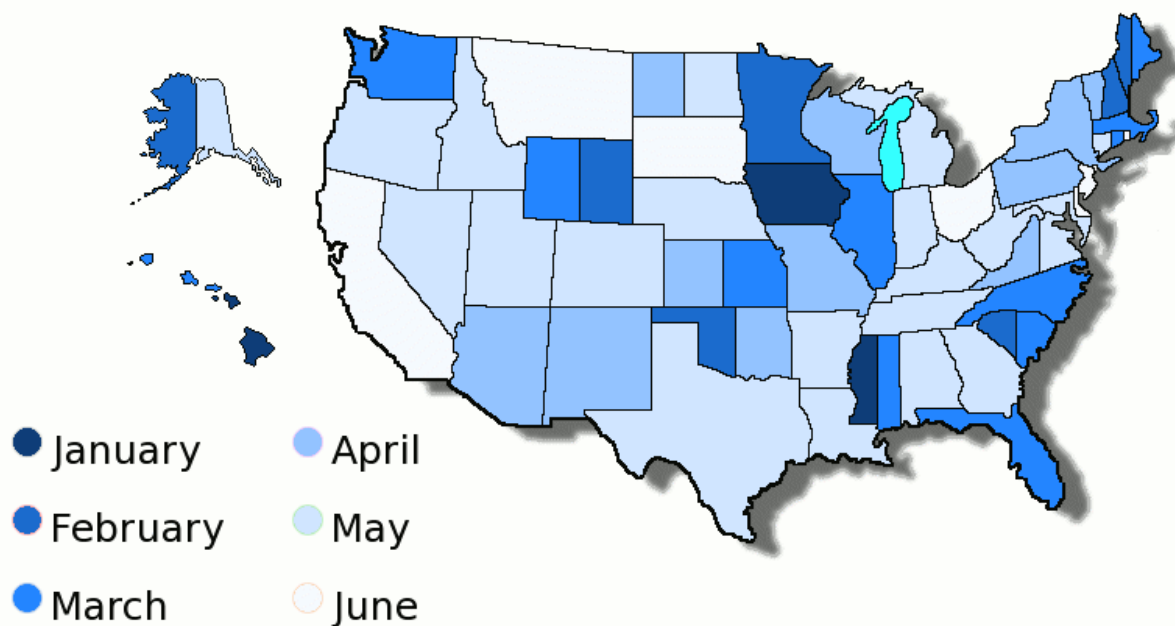


Figure 2.1: 1976 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

The 1976 Democratic nomination process (see Figure 2.1), with nothing attributed to southern primary movement, ended up having the effect that a regional primary would have been intended to have had: namely, producing a southern, ideologically moderate candidate. Coincidentally, Jimmy Carter's rise to the Democratic nomination and subsequently the presidency followed a [longshot candidate's] trajectory that intersected well with southern political actors' desires (in the context of a presidential nomination campaign). And like anything in politics, Carter's elevation in status and electoral success was well-timed in terms of the national political climate. The nation was openly anti-Nixon, and by extension, anti-Republican in the face of the Watergate scandal. Once Carter took office and began the task of governing, though, is when his

fortunes, like most of his presidential predecessors, began to wane. Looking toward 1980, then, the president's outlook for re-nomination, much less reelection, became far less probable than it had looked when the Georgian had entered the White House.

Frontloading Begins (1980)

It was within this context, that the presidential nomination process emerged from its period of adjustment following the changes ushered in by the McGovern-Fraser reforms. It was also the point – 1976-1980 – at which the frontloading of presidential delegate selection events found its origin. Frontloading began innocently enough: with President Carter attempting to shore up his chances to regain the Democratic presidential nomination in 1980. The Carter administration attempted to accomplish that goal through two means: 1) working through the Winograd Commission – the Mikulski Commission's successor – to develop a rules regime that would give the president an advantage over any and all challengers and 2) convincing three southern states to maintain their early presidential primaries or move their contests to earlier dates. Through the Winograd Commission, the Carter administration sought to close the window of time in which delegate selection events could be held – the smaller that window, the less likely the chances that a momentum-fueled challenger would become viable and take the nomination. But the Carter administration also used their influence to tighten candidate filing deadlines and to increase the threshold percentage required for candidates to receive any delegates from any contest (Mayer and Busch 2004).

None of those actions, however, had any direct impact on the frontloading of presidential primaries and caucuses. Again, it was the Carter administration's move to convince its 1976 lynchpin, Florida – where a showdown between Carter and George Wallace left just one southerner standing in the Democratic nomination race – to keep its primary in March and to talk

Presidential Primaries and Caucuses by Month (1980)

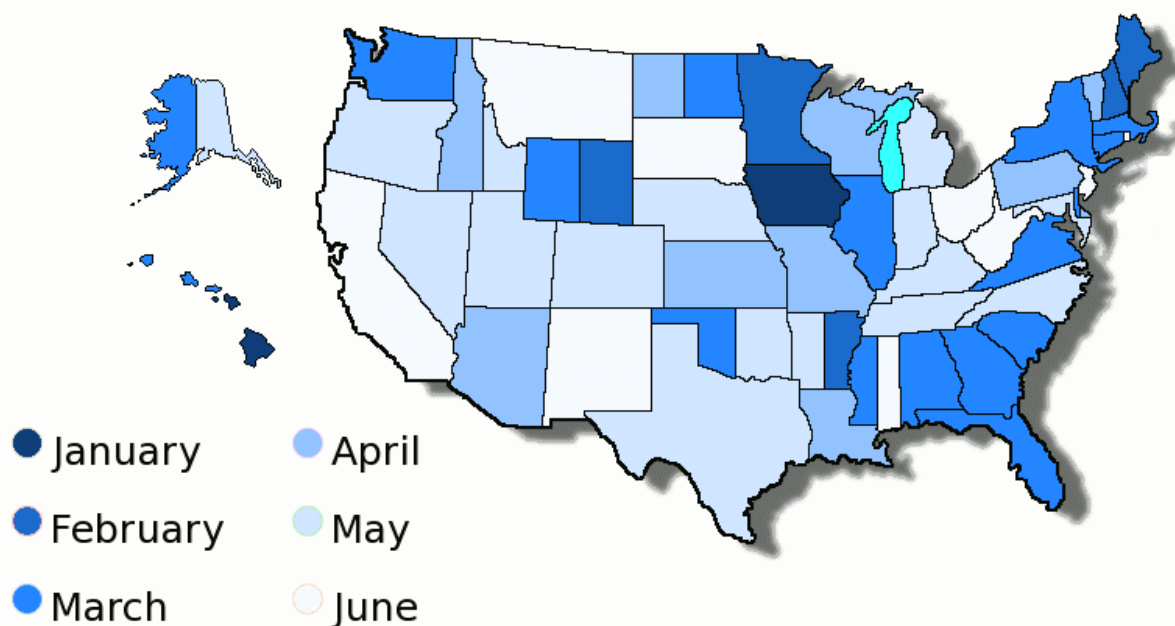


Figure 2.2: 1980 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

both Alabama and Georgia in to moving their contests up to join the Sunshine state (Stanley and Hadley 1987; Kamarck 2005)³. The impetus behind this action on the part of the administration was to counteract the relative imbalance of the calendar given a possible Ted Kennedy challenge to the president. With New Hampshire taking up its typical position at the head of the process and Massachusetts just a week later (see Figure 2.2), Kennedy could hypothetically be seen to

³ Carter also indicated later in remarks to the 1986 Southern Political Science Association meeting that his administration had spoken with representatives from North Carolina and Tennessee about each of those states moving up on the 1980 primary calendar as well (Stanley and Hadley 1987).

have a regional advantage over the president. In fact, the direct result would have potentially provided the Massachusetts senator with an early delegate lead that could have proven problematic to the president's attempts to win renomination. Indeed, the Carter team sought to establish some regional balance in terms of the calendar. Alabama, Florida and Georgia were strategically viewed in 1977-78 as the equalizers, if not kingpins, in the 1980 nomination race from the Carter perspective.⁴

Frontloading Takes Off Through a Southern Coalition (1984-1988)

Though modest, the moves Alabama and Georgia made between 1976 and 1980 opened the door to the possibility of additional states pulling the trigger on similar moves with the intent of making their states more influential in the presidential nomination process. Yet, whereas there had been no concern expressed over the possibility of frontloading – and its potential negative impacts – prior to the 1980 cycle, afterward, there was a sense that the movement of primaries could represent a very real problem to the process. This, however, revealed a contradiction in the motivations presented to the national-level actors within the [Democratic] party and the state-level actors – whether state legislators or state parties. On the one hand, the national parties wanted to maintain some level of control over the presidential nomination process. On the other, however, the states, or more precisely the decision-makers within them, were self-interested as well and sought to maximize the level of influence they had – individually or collectively – over that process.

For the first time, then, between 1980 and 1984, the Democratic Party – through the Hunt Commission – officially recognized the threat that frontloading presented to the national party's ability to maintain the level of control in the process they preferred (Mayer and Busch 2004).

⁴ As it turned out, Carter won four of the five early contests – Massachusetts was the exception – and it was not until after Carter had virtually wrapped up the nomination that Kennedy began to win contests and carve, unsuccessfully, into the president's delegate lead.

That concern was justified as seven states outside of the South shifted the dates on which their delegate selection events – in this case, mostly caucuses – to the earliest allowable period in 1984 (see Figure 2.3). That move was indicative of the state-level desire to have some direct impact on the candidate who emerged as the [Democratic] party's nominee. The problem from the national party's vantage point was that this jockeying for position among states would begin a race to the front that could ultimately lead to a national primary day – the effects of which were uncertain at that point.

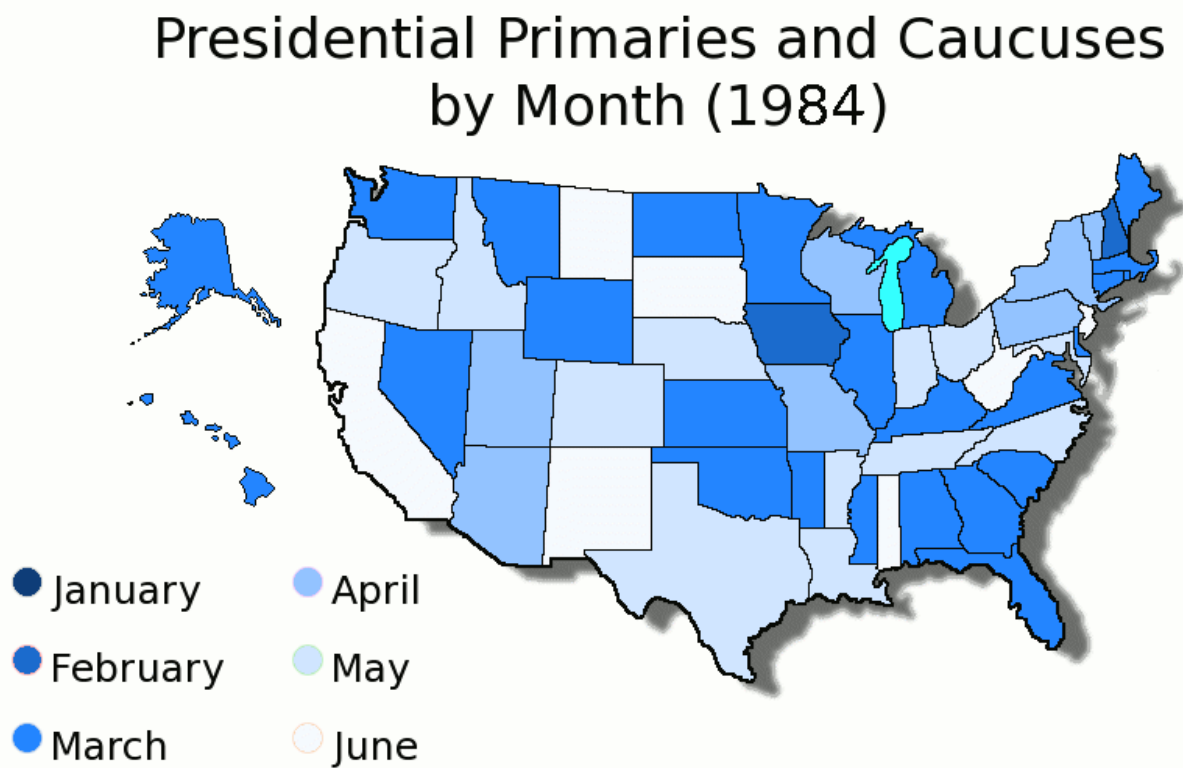


Figure 2.3: 1984 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

In fact, this is how the process played out over the 1980-1988 period. The 1984 cycle was marked by the move of several non-South caucus states while the 1988 nomination races witnessed the entire former confederacy coalescing on the earliest possible date on the primary calendar: the second Tuesday in March. Again, this was the contradiction that had emerged. The McGovern-Fraser reforms had the national party cede some of its control over the nomination process to the states and in the process, the unintended consequence that was frontloading surfaced. As such, there was a certain back and forth between states and/or regions as they all began to position or re-position their contests in the most advantageous [early] dates on a given primary calendar. In the lead-up to the 1988 nomination cycle, the Southern Legislative Conference put into motion the plan – as Governor Jimmy Carter had envisioned as far back as 1973 – to hold a unified southern regional primary comprised of fourteen southern and border states. The move was not so much a response to the primary and caucus movement prior to 1984 as it was a fulfillment of the aforementioned idea from the 1970s: an effort to produce a “better” Democratic presidential nominee who could garner some level of support from the South in the general election. The move, as speculated by Carter in remarks to the Southern Political Science Association meeting in 1986, would also put the spotlight on issues that were native to the South and lead to a more efficient campaign (Stanley and Hadley 1987).

While the frontloading that did occur in the interim period between the 1984 and 1988 elections was confined primarily to the South, the phenomenon was by no means a solely regional movement in 1988 (see Figure 2.4). Other states moved as well and two in particular, Arizona and Michigan flouted (Republican) party rules and actually began their presidential delegate selection processes in 1986, well before any of the eventual candidates in the field had thrown their hats in the ring (Apple 1988). The move, again, as was the case in the South, was

more about having influence over the process than about going earlier, but that was the most efficient means of achieving that goal. In the case of Michigan, the move to an earlier date combined with a switch from a primary to a caucus (in 1980) with the intent of providing the Michigan Republican Party with a larger voice in the selection of the nominee from the Great Lakes state. Given the state of the Republican Party in Michigan at the time, though, the move was as much about drawing attention to the state as a means of building a state party that had seen Democrats dominate elections for statewide office and for Congress. Again, though, frontloading was a means to an end, not the end itself.

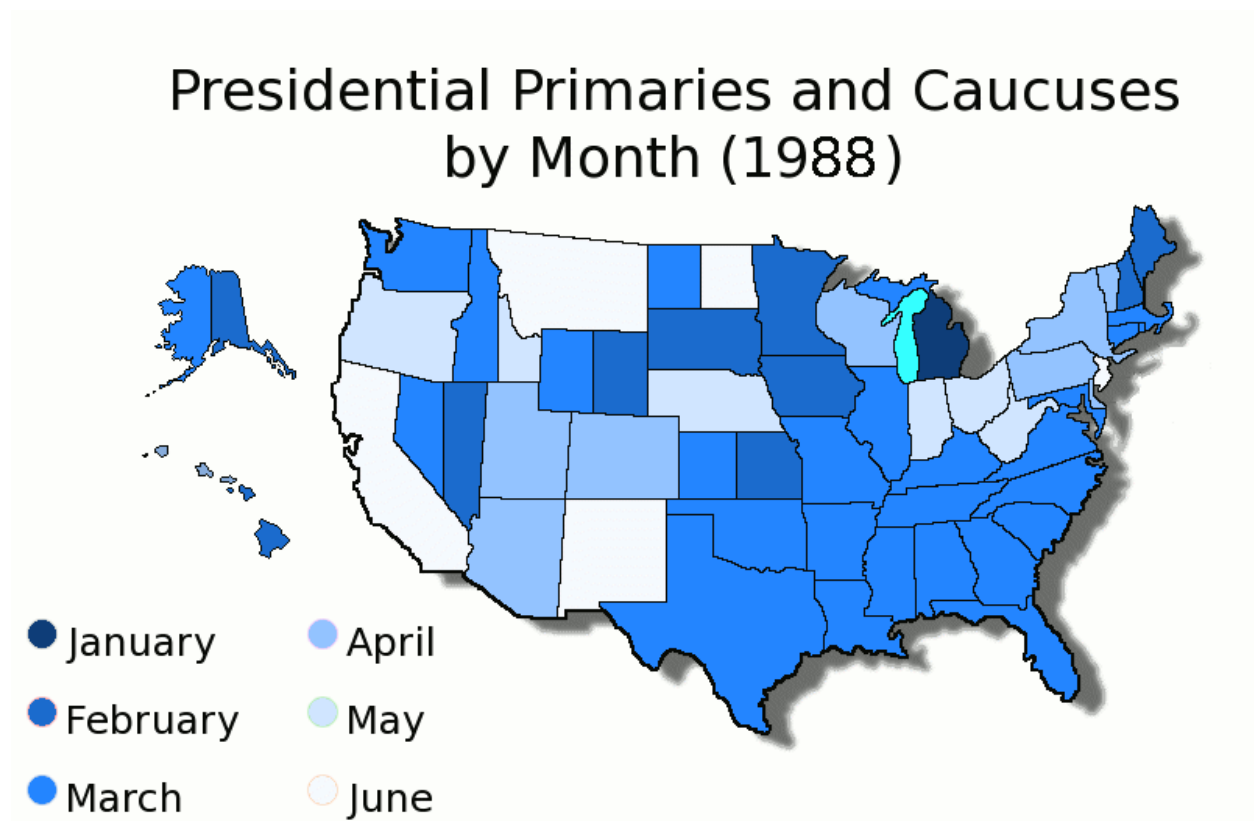


Figure 2.4: 1988 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

A Fundamental Change to Frontloading (1992-1996)

Some southern states ultimately – following the 1988 election – disagreed with the notion Carter espoused in Atlanta a few years prior. First of all, the movement prior to 1988 was orchestrated by the Democratic Party. Southern conservatives spearheaded the initiative, again, as a means of producing a Democratic nominee who could have some success in the South in the general election. The unintended consequence, though, was that many southern conservative voters jumped from the Democratic primaries to the Republican primaries and stayed there for the general election. The net effect, then, of the frontloading moves the southern states had made – Democratic-controlled legislatures and state parties had pulled the strings on the move (Stanley and Hadley 1989) – was that the other party's fortunes had been buttressed. And while some states stuck with the positions on the primary calendar established in 1988, other, more disillusioned states, decided to cut their losses and move back to their pre-1988 positions. Alabama, Arkansas, Kansas, Kentucky, North Carolina and Virginia all shifted away from the March dates their delegate selection events had occupied in 1988 and instead opted for later dates on the calendar in 1992 (see Figure 2.5).⁵ However, even though the 1992 calendar exhibited less frontloading than its predecessor in 1988, and was even marked by some *backloading*, the point at which fifty percent of the delegates plus one – the earliest point at which one candidate could effectively clinch the nomination – continued to inch closer to the beginning of the election year (Busch 2000; Mayer and Busch 2004; Norrander 2000).

5 One could argue that the 1992 backloading decisions were counterintuitive. The difference between 1988 and 1992 was that the latter cycle was one that involved only one active nomination; the Democratic nomination. State-level, Democratic decision makers and their states, then, were insulated from the same cross-over effect that typified the 1988 nomination races; there was no contested Republican nomination contest.

Presidential Primaries and Caucuses by Month (1992)

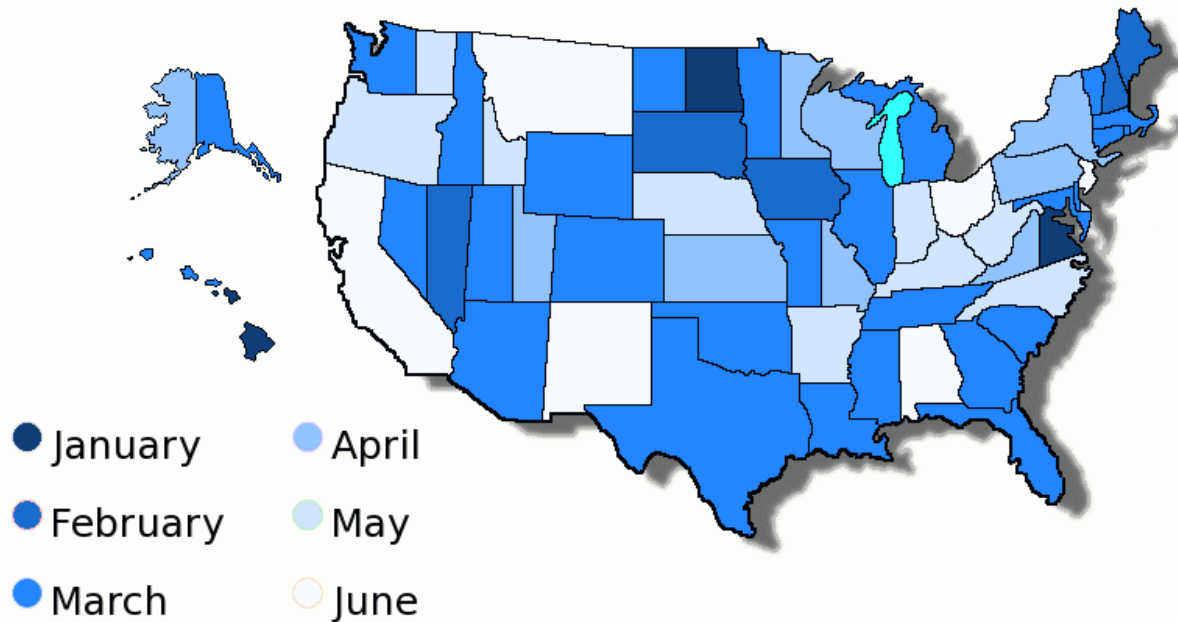


Figure 2.5: 1992 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

The 1992 primaries and caucuses, then, were marked not by the significant frontloading that 1988 had witnessed, but by a more subtle shift that only had an effect in the one active nomination race of the cycle.⁶ In 1996, with the Democratic Party on the sidelines, the Republican Party and its prospective nominees for president were left to shape and navigate the

⁶ Bill Clinton's "comeback" in New Hampshire propelled him to success in the following weeks, especially in Georgia, the biggest of the contests held on the first [Democratic] party-sanctioned week of the cycle – the first week in March. The Peach state had been moved up a week from 1988 – one week ahead of Super Tuesday in 1992 – at the behest of Clinton supporter and Georgia governor, Zell Miller. The move and subsequent win by Clinton helped "balance losses in Maryland and Colorado the same day" (Almanac of American Politics – <http://elections.nytimes.com/2008/president/states/georgia>).

resulting primary calendar in that cycle. The Republican National Committee made one move in 1996 that fundamentally shaped the frontloading phenomenon for the next several cycles, culminating with the significant shift in the lead up to the 2008 nomination races in both parties. Up to 1996, the frontloading movement that had taken place had resulted in a clustering of contests on the opening week of the party-sanctioned windows in which primaries and caucuses could be held. And following the McGovern-Fraser reforms and all the way through the 1992 cycle two decades later that translated in more primaries and caucuses during the front half of March.

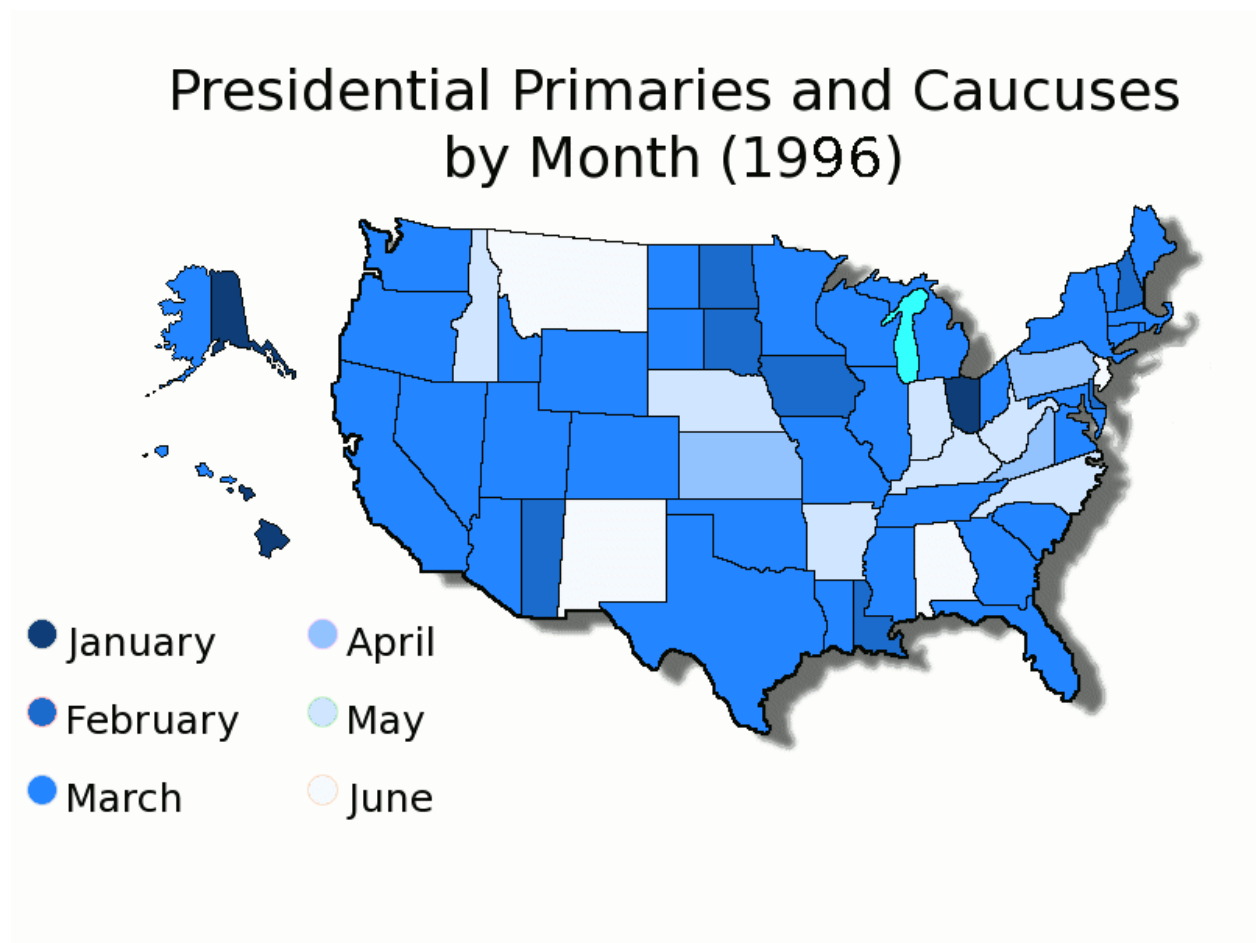


Figure 2.6: 1996 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

The 1996 cycle, though was different (see Figure 2.6). Again, the Democrats did not have an active nomination race with an incumbent, Bill Clinton, sitting in the White House. But the Republican Party saw an opportunity to nominate someone quickly in order to challenge a president who was embattled following the resounding Republican victories in the 1994 midterm congressional elections. To achieve this, the party allowed a handful of states to hold their delegate selection contests in February; effectively opening the window further than it ever been in the past.⁷

That portion of the process was within the control of the Republican Party. The states' ability to move within the 1996 calendar's window framework – still the first week in March to the first week in June for all non-exempt states – though, was not. And though, the Republicans' move into February hastened the frontloading that would come in subsequent cycles, that fact worked in tandem with California's shifting of its primary date for 1996 to completely alter the ways in which all future primary campaigns would *have* to be conducted. The sea change that California's move in 1996 represented was more than merely symbolic. By moving such a large portion of the total Republican delegates to be allocated in 1996 – over 8% of the Republican delegates – from the end of the process in early June to the last week in March meant that the point at which one candidate could reach the necessary number of delegates to secure the nomination was pushed even further forward.

7 While February proved through the 2000, 2004 and 2008 elections to be the new frontier of frontloading, the Republican Party also allowed exemptions, and thus, January contest dates, to a few caucus states – Alaska, Hawaii and Louisiana. In later years, such contests were allowed to go when they chose, but only if no actual delegates were allocated in the first step of the process. In 1996, however, all three of the aforementioned states allocated delegates to the Republican convention in the first round of their caucus processes (see Appendix A). All the while, the Republican Party also attempted to reign in frontloading in 1996. It was during that cycle that the party attempted to incentivize holding later contests by offering bonus delegates to states that did. The lure of going early supplanted that incentive and most states that moved, moved up to earlier dates in order to have an influence over the nomination process as opposed to holding a later, insignificant contest with additional delegates.

The problems inherent in frontloading had always been apparent: that increased contest clustering at the beginning of the process gave an even greater advantage to frontrunner candidates, decreased the quality of the overall campaign in the process and had the potential for leading to an impulse decision on who the nominee would be to represent the party in the fall general election (Mayer and Busch 2004). Those types of concerns had been raised as early as 1982 during the proceedings of the Hunt Commission within the Democratic Party. However, California's shift in 1996 turned what had been a potential problem prior to 1996 into a real problem during and after that cycle. States, after that point, instead of reacting from cycle to cycle were forced to begin making decisions on frontloading their delegate selection contests *within* cycles. The California move so changed the delegate calculus that states were forced to choose between having some role in the nomination of the parties' standard bearers (holding a contest with or prior to California) or risk being left out of the decision altogether (holding a primary or caucus after California). The shift, then, had the effect of significantly compressing the primary calendar which, in turn, exacerbated some of the pre-existing, yet evolving, problems associated with frontloading.

The Hyper-Frontloaded Era (2000-2008)

The Republican Party allowing for additional February contests in conjunction with the state of California's move from June into March effectively ushered in the hyper-frontloaded period in the history of post-reform presidential nominations. The 2000-2008 era was marked by two factors. First, frontloading continued to be an issue as an increased number of states moved their delegate selection events to the earliest possible date – the first week in March. However, this period was also affected by the staggered nature in which the Democratic and Republican Parties allowed states to hold contests in the months of January and February. As has already

been detailed, as of the 1996 cycle, the Republican Party opened February not only to Iowa and New Hampshire, but to a handful of other states as well.⁸

This trend continued during the 2000 nomination cycle (see Figure 2.7). However, as opposed to 1996, both parties had competitive nomination races. The result was that the handful of states that were allowed by the Republican Party to hold their primaries or caucuses in quick succession after Iowa and New Hampshire would have been out of compliance with the Democratic rules as laid out in Rule 10.A of the 2000 Democratic Delegate Selection Rules:

10. Timing of the Delegate Selection Process

A. No meetings, caucuses, conventions or primaries which constitute the first determining stage in the presidential nomination process (the date of the primary in primary states, and the date of the first tier caucus in caucus states) may be held prior to the first Tuesday in March or after the second Tuesday in June in the calendar year of the national convention. Provided, however, that the Iowa precinct caucuses may be held no earlier than 15 days before the first Tuesday in March; that the New Hampshire primary may be held no earlier than 7 days before the first Tuesday in March; that the Maine first tier caucuses may be held no earlier than 2 days before the first Tuesday in March. In no instance may a state which scheduled delegate selection procedures on or between the first Tuesday in March and the second Tuesday in June 1984 move out of compliance with the provisions of this rule.

States with February Republican contests and March Democratic contests were faced with a dilemma. In the cases of Arizona, Delaware and Michigan, each state had already moved its presidential primary into February (or kept them there after 1996) to take advantage of the Republican Party rules. State Democratic parties in each of those three states were faced with a decision between flaunting Democratic Party rules on delegate selection event timing in order to have a state-funded primary or paying the bill themselves for a less representative caucus (or more expensive primary) at a time that met with Democratic Party rules. None of the three state parties ultimately challenged the national Democratic Party's rules, though, and opted for later party-funded caucuses in March.

⁸ Iowa and New Hampshire were still granted exemptions to hold their respective contests first, but other states were allowed to cluster more closely behind them earlier in the calendar year starting in 1996 on the Republican side.

Presidential Primaries and Caucuses by Month (2000)

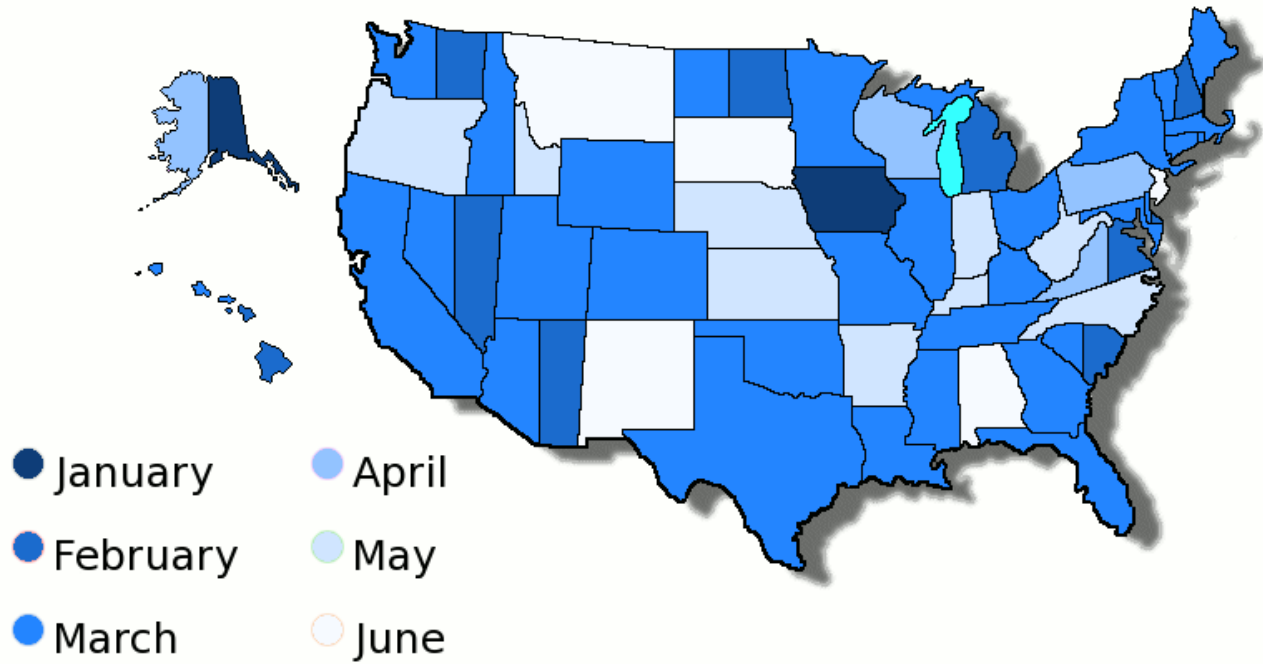


Figure 2.7: 2000 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

This had a significant impact on the course of both parties' nomination races that year. Both Al Gore and George W. Bush were heavy favorites heading into primary season. Yet, John McCain's surprisingly wide margin of victory over Bush in the New Hampshire primary coupled with the subsequent February contests kept the spotlight on the Republican Party's nomination race. On the Democratic side, meanwhile, Bill Bradley's challenge to the sitting vice president stood in neutral following New Hampshire until the former New Jersey senator's campaign finally flatlined after being blitzed by Gore on Super Tuesday at the beginning of March. While

Bush was able to eliminate McCain from contention on the same day, the momentum and enthusiasm had built up in the Republican contests in a way that it did not during the lull in contests that marked the Democratic primary calendar of 2000. In a similar position to where the Republican Party had been in 1996, the Democratic Party looked for ways to tweak its nomination process in ways that would produce the best challenger to George W. Bush in 2004. Having seen the effects of the February Republican contests in 2000, the Democratic National Committee under chairman Terry MacAuliffe opened the window in which the party's nominating contests could be held to include February contests and even earlier exemptions for Iowa and New Hampshire as a result (<http://www.usatoday.com/news/opinion/shapiro/596.htm>). Though the 2004 primary calendar was more frontloaded than any of the earlier post-reform calendars, it was not as hyper-frontloaded as 2000 had been. How early states collectively went, then, was only one piece of the overall frontloading phenomenon.

What changed between 2000 and 2004 was that some of the compression that marked the 2000 cycle's iteration of Super Tuesday – sixteen state contests on the earliest non-exempt date, March 7 – was alleviated due to the movement of some states into February. While states were certainly clustered into the month long period from the first week in February to the first week in March, that 2004 distribution of contests was far less compressed than what had occurred only four years earlier. Instead of a logjam during the opening week of the window, as was the case in 2000, there was a small collection of states – seven total -- that held contests on the first Tuesday in February 2004 (see Figure 2.8). That was followed by ten Democratic contests throughout the remainder of February and then by ten more contests on the first Tuesday in March, Super Tuesday. Candidates, then, had slightly more breathing room in 2004 to build some momentum behind a candidacy during primary season than was the case in 2000.

Presidential Primaries and Caucuses by Month (2004)

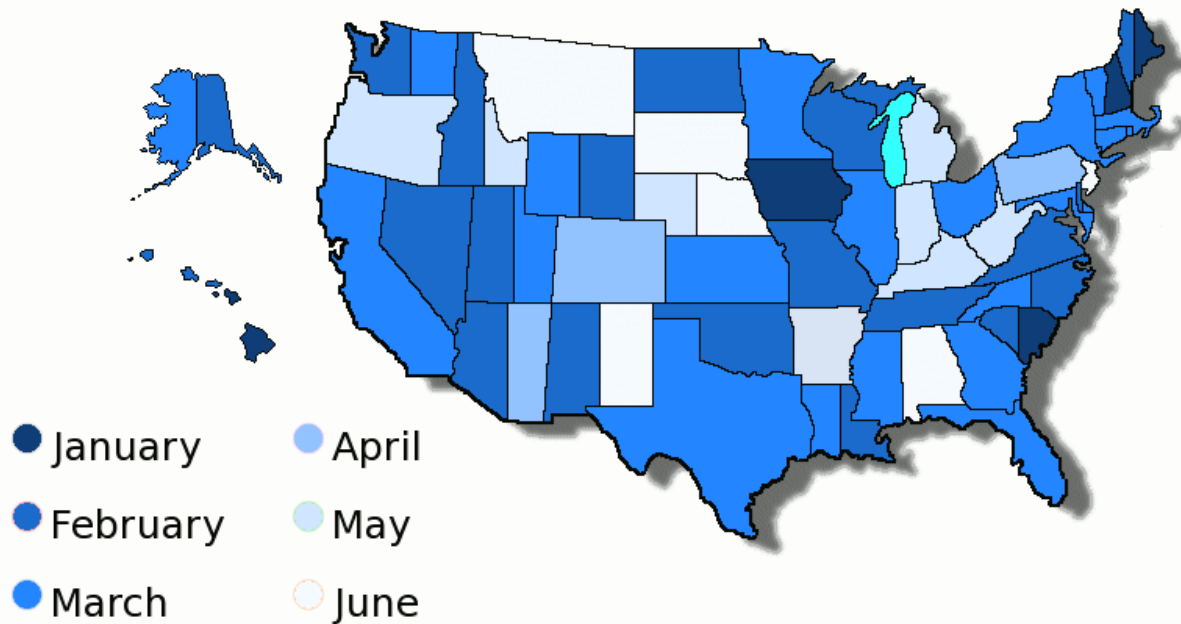


Figure 2.8: 2004 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

The same type of compression that was the hallmark of 2000 returned in 2008 after a brief respite in 2004, but in 2008 it was a month earlier – in February instead of March – than it had been when both parties held active nomination races at the turn of the millennium (see Figure 2.9). States that wanted and had the ability to hold contests as early as possible in 2008 scheduled their delegate selection events for the earliest date allowed by both parties, the first Tuesday in February. The result was that not only was the 2008 primary calendar earlier than

any of the prior post-reform calendars, but it was more compressed as well with twenty-three states holding primaries or caucuses in one or both parties.

Presidential Primaries and Caucuses by Month (2008)

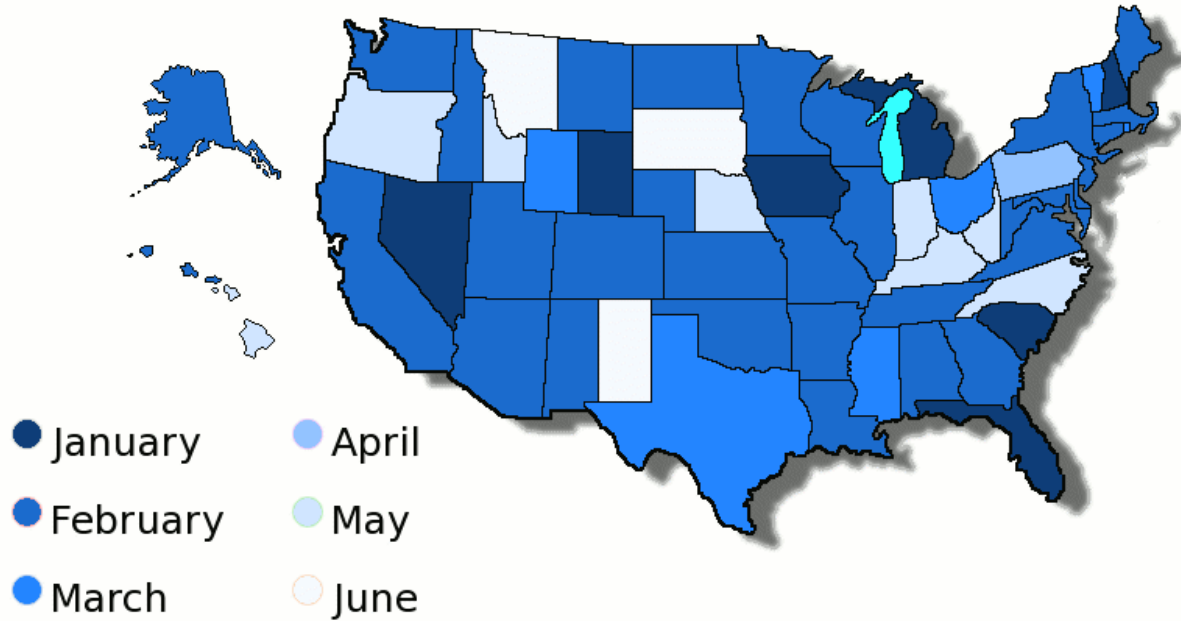


Figure 2.9: 2008 Presidential Primary and Caucus Timing (States bisected horizontally represent states where the Democratic and Republican parties in the state held delegate selection events on different dates. The Democratic Party's contest is denoted by the shading on the left and the Republican contest by that on the right. See Appendix A for the full primary and caucus calendar.)

More importantly, approximately 60% of the delegates (to the Democratic convention) were at stake during the opening week of the window.⁹ While states had little choice but to go early if they desired to have some influence over the identities of the two parties' nominees, the

⁹ That figure does not include the delegates from Florida and Michigan. Each state opted to hold primaries outside of the window designated by both parties, and while each state had their entire slates of delegates stripped by the Democratic Party, both states seated full delegations at the party's August convention in Denver. The original sanction as called for in the rules governing Democratic delegate selection for 2008 would have penalized each state half their delegations. This was the penalty the Republican Party utilized and stuck to as well.

candidates were forced to erect national campaign apparatuses in order to compete for the nominations. An early and compressed environment yields a constrained choice set for voters. Influence, then, was sought, but not ultimately achieved in 2008 by states that shifted their delegate selection events to earlier dates. John McCain surged to a sizable delegate advantage following the bevy of contests on Super Tuesday, but did not wrap up the nomination for another month. On the Democratic side, Super Tuesday ended up being a wash. Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama emerged on equal footing after February 5, but Obama was able to string together consecutive victories in a host of caucus (and primary) states to close out the month before Clinton won again in Texas and Rhode Island at the beginning of March. The real impact on the race, though, was in what happened in those later states. Those were the states that decided the outcome of the Democratic nomination.

What the contest shifting prior to the 2008 primary season exemplified best, however, was the shift from cycle to cycle, reactionary frontloading to intra-cycle movement. As early as 2005 and 2006, states like Arkansas and Alabama, respectively were already passing legislation to reschedule their primaries for the earliest allowable date. The momentum for this picked up following the midterm elections in 2006 and into 2007. By the end of the 2007, sixteen states – among them such delegate-heavy states as California, New York and Illinois – had joined the seven states that had occupied the first Tuesday in February in 2004 on that same date in 2008. This not only created the most top-heavy calendar in the post-reform era, but also packed the most contests into one week, surpassing the 20 contests that occurred on the second week in March in 1988.¹⁰

¹⁰ In both cases – 1988 and 2008 – the clustering occurred at the earliest possible date on which the parties allowed states to hold delegate selection events.

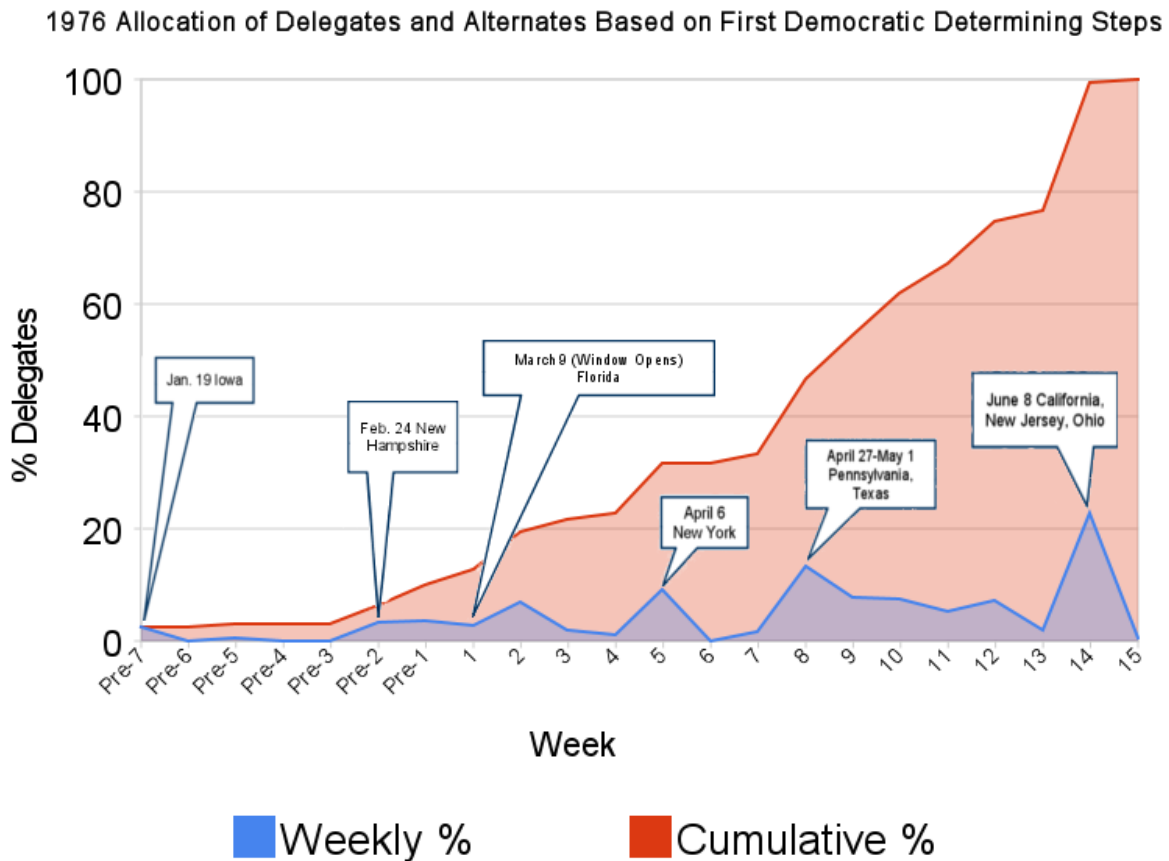


Figure 2.10: Weekly and Cumulative Democratic Delegate Allocation (1976) – Source: Democratic Change Commission

The evolution, then, from 1976-2008 is quite stark. Figures 2.10 and 2.11 illustrate just how far the post-reform nomination process has progressed in terms of the timing of states' delegate selection events. On the one hand, the 1976 allocation of delegates – on the Democratic side – accumulates rather evenly across the duration of the nomination process. In other words, there was a gradual escalation in the cumulative number of delegates throughout the window period. In fact, the biggest single week, delegates-wise, was the week concluding the process in 1976, with just more than one-fifth of the total Democratic delegates at stake.

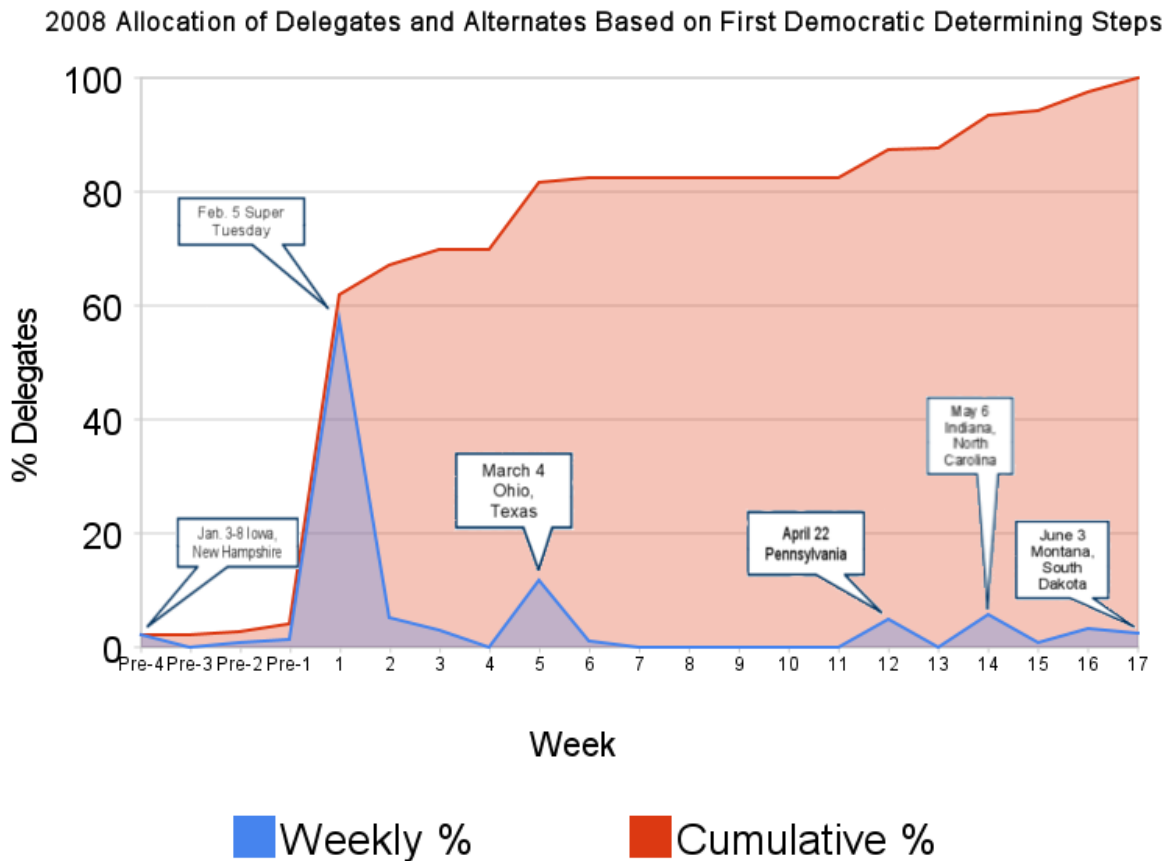


Figure 2.11: Weekly and Cumulative Democratic Delegate Allocation (2008) – Source: Democratic Change Commission

Over the course of the next eight nomination cycles, frontloading obviously intervened and changed the process and the ways in which candidates, voters and states approached presidential nomination races. From the states' perspective, then, instead of the even dispersion of delegates/events across the entire primary calendar witnessed in a year such as 1976, states' moves, and thus the clustering of a significant number of delegates, shifted the nomination decisions to the beginning of the process. Again, by the 2008 cycle there were more than 60% of the delegates at stake in both nomination races on or before the first week in February; a stark contrast to how the calendar was shaped only 32 years prior. Gone was the even allocation of delegates across the entire calendar. In its place, was a calendar, and as a result, an environment,

where clear frontrunning candidates emerging from the invisible primary were insulated from momentum-gathering challengers in a way that would have been nearly impossible for similar candidates in the early cycles following reform. A part of the downside to the hyper-frontloaded calendar was that, in a year like 2008 on the Democratic side – where there was no clear-cut frontrunner – two-thirds of the delegates could be allocated nearly evenly between two candidates very early and leave very few contests over the remaining three months of the calendar to actually decide who the nominee would be. That, though, has been an exception rather than a rule.

Why do some states move, but not others?

Though there are obvious implications for the nomination process resulting from frontloading, from which spring numerous normative questions, one question remains something of a mystery: Why is it that some states have shifted their delegate selection events to earlier dates during the post-reform era and other states have not? The motivation, and certainly the desire, to move and have an influence over the identities of the parties' nominees, has spread to more and more states throughout the last nearly four decades. Yet, some states have either been either unwilling or unable (or both) to move their delegate selection events – either primaries or caucuses – to dates on which their influence could be fully realized. The following chapter reviews not only the literature on the matter of frontloading but also provides a broader theory for the shifting (or non-movement) of primaries and caucuses that the post-reform presidential nomination process has witnessed. The objective is to piece together the literature and to offer a more detailed explanation of the frontloading process from the state perspective.

Chapter 3. A Theory of Frontloading

"I believe it is critical that Ohioans have a voice in who the presidential nominees are before it is a foregone conclusion."

– [State Sen. Eric Kearney](#) (OH)

"For far too long presidential candidates have seen New Jersey only as a source of campaign cash. New Jersey is now a primetime player in the nomination process, and candidates will have to come here, speak to voters and hear and respond to our concerns about a variety of issues that impact our state."

– [Former Gov. Jon Corzine](#) (NJ)

"When we hold our primary in March, we have very little influence or impact on the party's nominee. Right now, presidential primaries are like spectator sports for Texas."

– [State Rep. Helen Giddings](#) (TX)

"We want to make sure that Georgia voters have input in the nomination of presidential candidates. By moving it [the primary] forward, we will ensure the major candidates will come to our state and seek the support of the voters."

– [State Rep. Austin Scott](#) (GA)

"The right to vote is the foundation of our nation's democracy, and Florida voters can rest assured that they will have an election system they can believe in. With an earlier presidential primary, Florida will now take its rightful place near the front of the line in determining the next leader of the free world."

– [Gov. Charlie Crist](#) (FL)

Money. Influence. Legitimacy. Ultimately, all three coalesce to some extent at the state level to form the basic motivating factors behind the decisions by states to position or reposition their delegate selection events on earlier dates from one presidential nomination cycle to another. At the very least, these are the three most often mentioned reasons given by state-level actors – such as those quoted above – to justify why they have shifted or plan to attempt to shift their primary or caucus to an earlier date in an upcoming presidential nomination cycle. Big states holding later contests – like California prior to 1996 – have resented being treated like ATMs for candidates; a place where money could be raised, but ultimately spent somewhere else – somewhere with an early primary or caucus. Given the staggered nature of the presidential primary process – again, that some states hold earlier contests than others – and the fact that the evolution of the process following reform has seen nominations secured earlier and earlier, those

states stuck at the tail end of the primary calendar face an influence deficit that their earlier brethren do not encounter. Namely, if the nomination has been wrapped up prior to the point at which a state's delegate selection event has been held, then that state has no impact on the identity of either party's nominee. For those states, the legitimacy of the process is lacking.

Yet, the same cast of characters, for the most part, continues to occupy the later slots on the primary calendar cycle after cycle. There have been attempts at frontloading in most of those states – Pennsylvania, North Carolina and Oregon to name a few. However, despite the same concerns (money, influence, legitimacy) cited by state-level actors involved in the repositioning process in successful frontloading states, these “permanently” later states have roadblocks that prevent the decision-makers in the matter from adequately addressing the perceived quick fix: an earlier primary or caucus. Those states, or at least the actors within them, charged with the decision making in the timing of a state's delegate selection event show a *willingness* to shift the date on which their presidential nomination contest is held, but for one reason or another lack the *ability* to actually shift the timing.

This chapter will explore what those roadblocks are and why it is that their presence prevents some states from shifting the dates on which their primaries or caucuses are held. Furthermore, how the absence of those factors allows the remaining states the freedom to insure a state's place at the table when it comes to influencing the presidential nomination process will also be detailed. The first step is to examine the literature surrounding the frontloading phenomenon, to set the context for how the frontloading decision is made at the state level. That groundwork will be laid, and then a broad theory of frontloading decision making will be constructed from which hypotheses will emerge to be tested in subsequent chapters. Out of that theory, a piecing together of the motivating factors in the evolution of frontloading – from the

standpoint of the extant political science literature on the matters surrounding frontloading – since the advent of reform will be necessary. Special attention will be paid to the state-level, *structural* factors that enable or deter states from shifting their primaries and caucuses between cycles – heretofore missing from the broader explanation of frontloading – in addition to the political, economic and cultural explanations that have been offered in the literature to varying degrees.

Literature Review

In the nearly four decades since the McGovern-Fraser reforms took effect, much has changed on the landscape of the presidential nominating process (Crotty 1983; Polsby 1983; Shafer 1983). Candidates have come and gone, campaign cycles start earlier and earlier, increasing sums of money are committed to White House bids, yet, one thing during that interim has remained clear: rules still matter (Aldrich 1980; Geer 1986; Norrander 1996). Whether the rules award delegates to candidates by winner-take-all, proportional or some method in between (Cavala 1974; Lingle and Shafer 1976), open or close the process to independents and partisans of the opposite party (Southwell 1988; Steger 2000; Meinke, et al. 2006), or simply offer a choice between a primary or a caucus, national party rules have a bearing on which candidates emerge as their parties' standard bearers for the November general election (Southwell 1992).

It is within this national-party-rule framework that the decisions on the timing of delegate selection events are made. During the post-reform era, a pattern has emerged that has translated into states shifting to earlier dates from one cycle to the next. What started, then, as candidates increasingly emphasizing early states quickly gave way to states jockeying for position on the presidential primary calendar in order to capture that candidate attention. The parts of this cycle are encapsulated nicely in the example of Jimmy Carter. Carter's successful bid for the White

House in 1976 began by focusing on and winning in the Iowa caucuses. Three years later, in the midst of a tumultuous term in office, the Carter administration's strategy continued to focus on early states. In the face of a potential challenge from within his own party—from Ted Kennedy—and considering that the 1980 calendar offered the Massachusetts senator an opportune pair of early contests in New Hampshire and Massachusetts, the Carter camp sought to create a counter to that potential threat (Gurian, et al. n.d.). Scheduled the week after the Massachusetts primary (and two weeks after the New Hampshire primary) was the Florida primary. Since Florida had been pivotal to Carter in 1976—the win helping the former Georgia governor eliminate George Wallace—an enhanced southern strategy was thought to be beneficial to tamping down the challenge from Kennedy. As such, members of the Carter team had discussions with state governmental actors in both Alabama and Georgia about shifting the dates on which those states' primaries were positioned. Those changes to earlier primary and caucus dates on the nominating calendar is a process that has come to be known as frontloading.

The direct consequences of this phenomenon are clear enough at the national level. As more and more states coalesce around the earliest date allowed by the two major parties, the more compressed the calendar of nominating events becomes. The indirect consequences and those at the state level, though, are not as clearly understood. As a result, the presidential nomination campaign becomes a rigorous test for the candidates, offers a constantly changing playing field for voters, and creates mixed returns on the investments states make in moving to earlier dates in the first place. In the states, the goal of moving is to increase the state's influence on the nomination decision(s) as well as the attention it receives from the candidates and media. There are, however, alternatives to the frontloaded system that have been proposed. Ridout and Rottinghaus (2008) have found that the frontloaded system is more beneficial to early states than

any of the various regional primary systems that have been proposed since 2000.¹¹ For the voters in each state, frontloading creates potential confusion as to when a state's nominating contest is (Cohen, et al. 2003; n.d.), but also affects turnout depending on whether the contest is held prior to or following the point at which the nomination race has been decided (Atkeson and Maestas 2004). For the candidates, those who have not solidified themselves as a party's clear front-runner in the pre-primary polls and/or in fund-raising are disadvantaged in the post-reform era (Mayer 1996a). Being behind in those indicators of success means those candidates outside the coveted front-runner position(s) have a more difficult time competing in and winning early contests, which affects their ability to raise and spend funds (Gurian 1986; 1993a; 1993b), catch up in the polls, or generally reverse the trends of the invisible primary period (Hadley 1976). That, in turn, further compromises a candidate's ability to compete as the frequency and number of contests increases. As competition dwindles, the implications frontloading has for democratic theory increase. That, in itself, is antithetical to the tenor of the reforms from which the frontloading phenomenon sprang.

While the consequences of frontloading—treating the phenomenon as an independent variable—have been addressed, the motivation for and variation of the decisions to reposition nominating contests—frontloading as a dependent variable—has received far less attention. It has been demonstrated that states with early delegate selection events gain far more media and candidate attention—in addition to candidate spending—than do states holding later contests (Norrander 1992, Mayer and Busch 2004). That creates an environment that further promotes frontloading, but the model—using delegate selection event timing as the independent variable and either statewide candidate spending or media attention as dependent variables—fails to

¹¹ See Hadley and Stanley (1987; 1989) for more on the Southern regional primary and its implications for the 1988 cycle.

encompass what is happening at the state level, where those decisions are being made. The national-level implications are explored, but the state-level factors are yet to be adequately incorporated into the wider picture of the frontloading phenomenon. The literature, then, has provided a glimpse into the motivations for frontloading occurring, but has failed to fully encompass the state-level factors that make it more or less difficult for states to have shifted the dates on which their delegate selection events are held in the first place.

Why is it, then, that some states move while other stay put? The calendar years 1980 and 2008 – not the primary calendars – are identical. The dates in both years fell on the same days, and there are nearly ten states (Indiana, North Carolina, Oregon and Pennsylvania among them) that held nominating contests on the same dates during the 2008 cycle as they did in 1980. Why? Why is it that there has been this movement in primary and caucus timing – movement toward the beginning of the calendar – since the McGovern-Fraser reforms, yet some states have moved while others have not (see Figure 3.1)? Some light has been shed on the variation in states' willingness to shift primary or caucus dates due to the dominant political culture in that state (Carman and Barker 2005). However, that examination of the influence a state's political culture has on the frontloading process paints the state-level variation with a broad brush and casts the issue in terms of a state's willingness. What is lost in that study are the contextual factors within each state that affect the *ability* to move to an earlier date and not just a state's willingness to reposition their delegate selection events. All things being held equal, all states would move to the front of the presidential nomination queue. Yet, conditions are not and have not, over the last ten presidential election cycles, been the same for all states. The result has been that any given state's willingness to move may have been clear cut in a given cycle (the

motivation was there), but that the same state's ability to shift its primary or caucus to an earlier date varied based on factors that were unique to it.

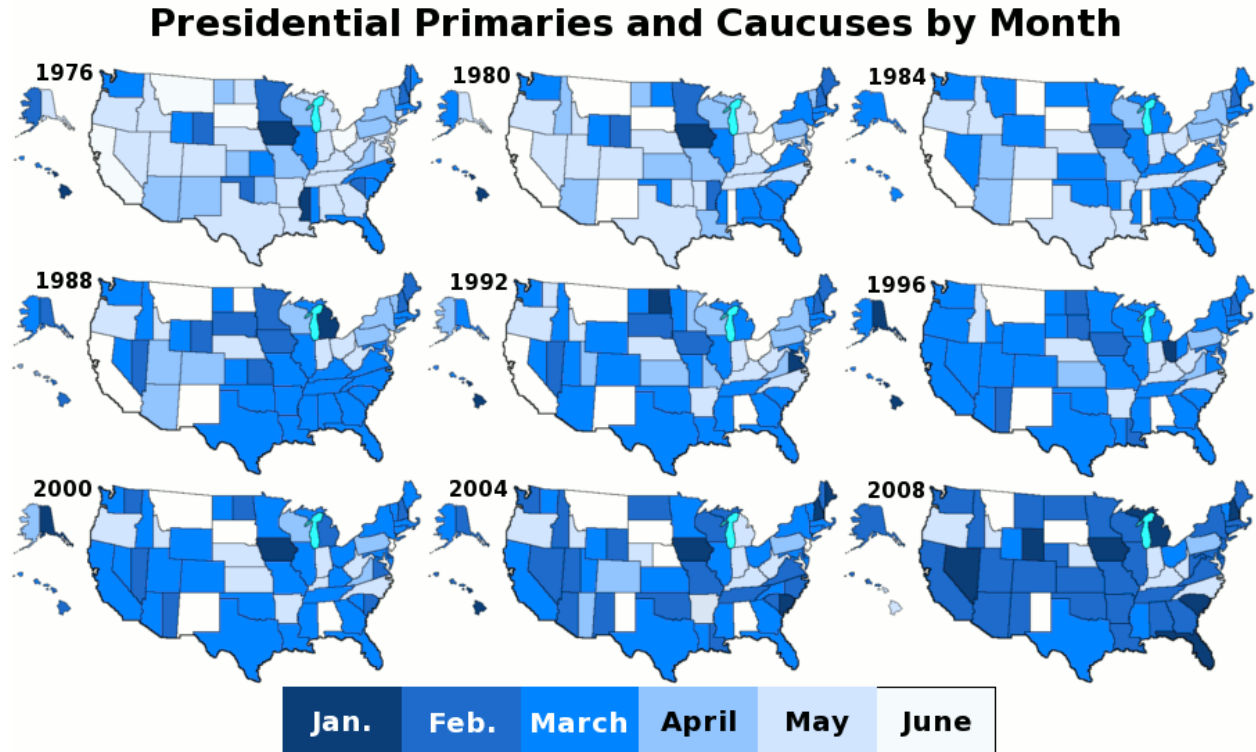


Figure 3.1: The Evolution of Frontloading (1976-2008)

This research intends to fill that void in our understanding of the frontloading process; to construct a theory of the frontloading phenomenon by pulling in specific, state-level factors that vary across states and impact that decision. Broadly, this can be framed as a discussion built on the notion that there are differences between the states. There is variation in the types of those differences, though, and they can be broken into four main groups of factors, all of which have the potential to impact both a state's willingness *and* ability to move their delegate selections to earlier dates. It is the examination of these four groups – political, economic, cultural and structural – both individually and working in concert, that will be the basis for determining the

influences on the frontloading decision in the research to follow. This particular set up borrows from the examination Meier and Holbrook (1992) conducted on the incidence and variation of political corruption across the fifty states. Similar to the intent here, they hypothesized and found differences in the level of corruption based on political, historical/cultural, structural and bureaucratic patterns within each state. In other words, these are competing explanations that intermingle to alter the state-to-state environments in which corruption occurs. Instead of political corruption, however, the conditions under which frontloading decisions are made will be the focus of this research.

A Theory of Frontloading Decision Making

Understanding the variation in the conditions throughout the states requires an examination of the field on which the decision to reposition nominating contests plays out. Between cycles, the national parties construct the rules under which delegate selection to the national conventions is to take place.¹² Within those guidelines, are rules concerning the period

12 Traditionally, the Democratic Party has reexamined the rules governing the party's nominations between cycles. A new working group is formed every four years at the national convention and is tasked with determining the combination of rules that will produce the best possible presidential nominee in the time before the next nomination cycle. Matters have been far different on the Republican side. While the Democrats took a more progressive approach to dealing with the divide in influence over the nomination process by elite and rank-in-file members of the party, the Republicans stood idle. The main outcome of the Democrats' McGovern-Fraser reforms was the proliferation of primaries as a means of allocating national convention delegates. Over time, the Republican Party, pressured into it by the changes on the Democratic side, adopted a similar decentralization (from elite to rank-in-file members) of the nomination decision-making apparatus. However, unlike the national Democratic Party, the Republican National Committee was much less willing to provide an overly detailed set of rules to govern the nomination process.

While there were rules from the national party, the Republicans left many decisions up to the states (ie: how to allocate delegates, what type of contest to hold, the timing of those contests). It is within this context – the differences in rules across the two parties – that the Republican Party's quadrennial method of constructing rules for future nomination cycles is highlighted. Through every cycle up to and including the 2008 nomination race, the Republican Party had traditionally set its rules for the next nomination at the preceding convention. That had the effect, at least over time, of depriving the party of the flexibility in rules making that the Democrats had with their between-cycle working group. In other words, if conditions for the next nomination race were altered in the time between the convention (when the Republican rules were made) and the start of that nomination race, the Republicans did not have the ability to take advantage of those changes by tweaking their rules. The Democrats could. It was not until after the 2008 nomination cycle – at the 2008 convention in Minneapolis – that the Republican Party, for the first time, created a Temporary Delegate Selection Committee to examine and recommend nomination rules changes midstream, ahead of the 2012 primary season.

within which a state may hold its delegate selection. Referred to as the window, this period has ranged from mid-March to the first week in June in the 1970s to just after New Years to the first week in June in 2008. Over the last four cycles (1996-2008), the front boundary of that window shifted from the first Tuesday in March to the first Tuesday in February. The result has been an exacerbation of the frontloaded calendar with events earlier in the calendar year and a larger concentration of events at the beginning of the process.

The Republican Party, for example, allowed February contests in Arizona, Delaware, Michigan and South Carolina in 1996 and the Democratic Party followed suit for the 2004 cycle, allowing states to position their nominating contests in February as well.¹³ States already positioned at the front end of the calendar before that shift were given the leeway to move, or in some cases move again, to the earliest allowable date. All the while, both parties instituted bonus delegates systems to entice states to go later on the calendar (Busch 2000). Those efforts, though, were all for naught. Most of the states that could move, or found conditions more ideal for a move, shunned the extra delegates in favor of influencing the nomination decision. The result was a continuation of frontloading and a clustering of states positioned early on the calendar to ensure that they were not too late in the process to have an impact on determining the identity of either one or both parties' nominees.

That some states are better positioned than others to alter the date on which their delegate

¹³ In 2000, when both parties' nominations were at stake, these four states had two different sets of scheduling guidelines to follow. These same four states plus North Dakota, Virginia and Washington all had Republican contests in February, in line with the GOP rules widening the window. Democrats in each of those states did not have that option, lest they violate Democratic National Party rules. State Democrats were forced to comply with the scheduling rules and hold contests on or after the first Tuesday in March, 2000. In 2008, Florida and Michigan Democrats opted to violate the window rule and hold contests before the earliest allowable date. Both the 2000 and 2008 primary seasons offer examples of the varying levels of state party resistance to national party rules. Goldstein (2002) has found, for instance, that the higher the levels of party organization within a state were, the greater resistance to the initial McGovern-Fraser reforms was. Where contest scheduling is concerned, there has not been as much tension between the states and the national parties, save Florida and Michigan in 2008.

selection events are held is the main point of contention here. The theory that emerges in regard to the decision to frontload, then, is one that hinges on the idea of the path of least resistance. Those states with a higher number of roadblocks standing in the way of shifting the date on which their delegate selection event is held are much less able, though not necessarily willing, to do so. The costs of moving are higher. In states where the obstacles to moving are diminished, the instances of frontloading are increased. In this case, the costs of moving are lower. And though the benefits derived from frontloading are not uniform across states, the lowest bar – holding a contest early enough that it precedes the point at which the nomination is *likely* to be won and thus ensuring that a state's voters have their say in determining the nominees – can more easily be achieved.¹⁴ That benefit is more likely to outweigh the costs of any frontloading decision in states with a reduced number of obstacles to that move.

With the national party rules in place, the next piece in the puzzle is the person or group charged with the task of deciding when to schedule a state's primary or caucus. The costs increase if the state government is involved in the process and not simply the state parties. State parties have the first and final say in the timing decision as they are the entities tasked with drawing up the delegate selection plans for their states. In states where caucuses, conventions, or party-run primaries are the means of allocating delegates to the national convention, that is where the buck stops. The state parties opt for one of those methods, draft it into their delegate selection proposal and wait for approval of the plan from the national party.¹⁵ This is much less

14 This is not the sole benefit of frontloading, but is the most often cited reasoning behind the decision by state-level actors.

15 This approval process is more strenuous on the Democratic side than on for the Republican Party owing to the more detailed set of rules that the national party typically adopts. Again, as was mentioned previously, the Republican Party grants the states (or state parties) more discretion in terms of the rules governing how they allocate delegates to the national convention.

costly in terms of the structural impediments to frontloading if the decision on the matter is filtered through just one decision maker.

If, however, state government is involved and has provided for a primary election in a given state, the decision-making process becomes more complicated for state parties. It is more complicated simply because more actors have been introduced into the frontloading decision-making calculus. The institution of a presidential primary means that the state legislature has passed and the governor has signed off on using that method as the means of allocating national convention delegates for both parties. In most cases, state parties choose the state-funded election over a party-financed election if a primary has been created by the state government. For state parties, that is the more cost-effective option. Choosing and sticking with that option over time, though, institutionalizes the state government as a part of the process, making future changes to nominating contest dates more difficult. Any change necessitates not only the state party desiring a move, but the state government as well.

State parties, then, are wedded to the decisions of their state legislative and executive brethren if they choose to continue utilizing the cheaper — to them — primary elections. That effectively serves as a way of introducing partisanship into the equation. In legislatures in which party control is split between chambers or in states where a unified legislature is countered by a governor of the opposite party, passing any legislation, much less a repositioning of a primary election, becomes challenging. Often, the parties have the opposite preferences in terms of the timing of their delegate selection events. Some state parties are then faced with the tradeoff between either footing the bill for an earlier caucus or party-run primary or accepting the state-

financed primary at a later, less influential date. In the post-reform era, that has more often than not meant state parties accepting the state-run primary.¹⁶

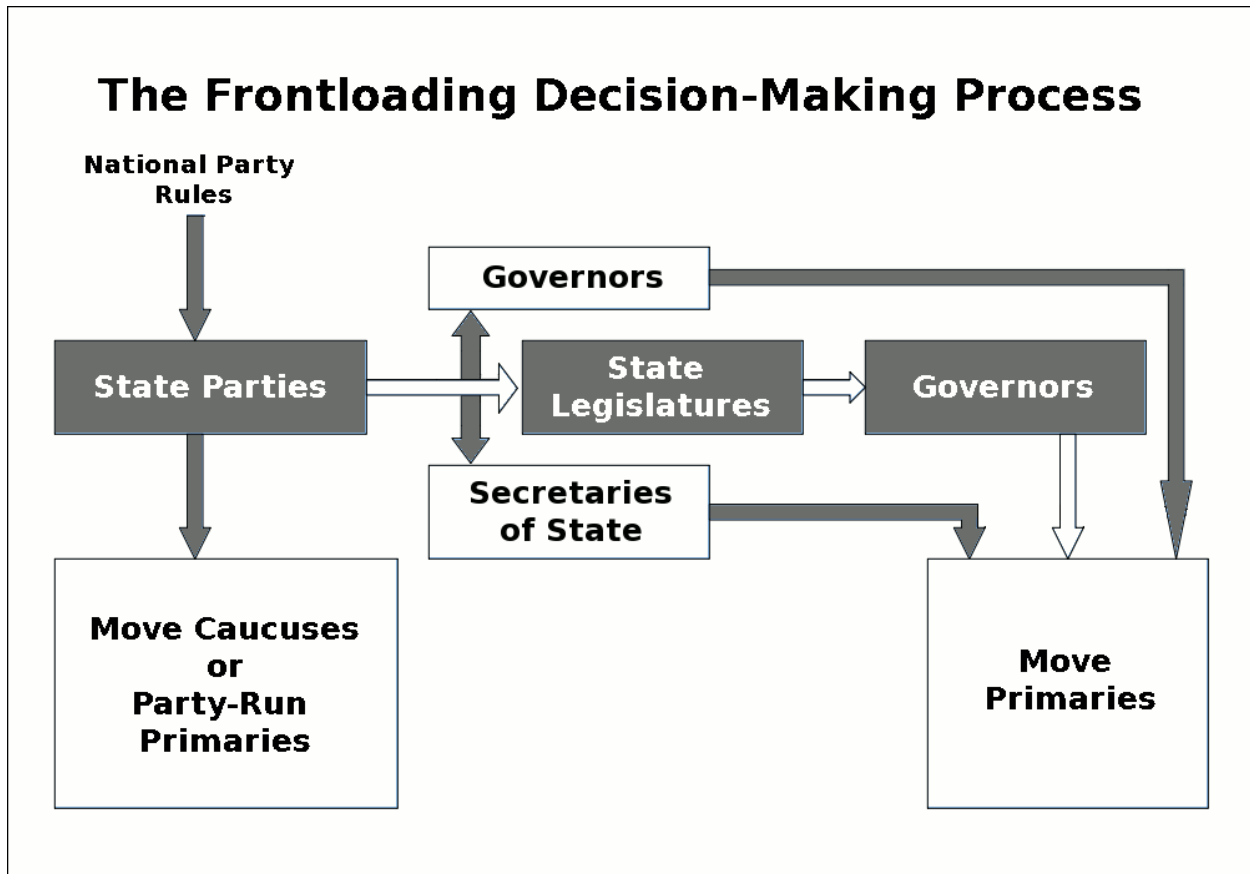


Figure 3.2: A Frontloading Decision-Making Flowchart

Increasingly over the course of the time since reform, though, there has been not only a proliferation of primaries, but a massive shift of delegate selection events toward the earliest allowable date. Entailed therein is the notion, again, that some states are better equipped than others to make a move. There is a hierarchy that puts states with fewer actors involved in the frontloading decision at an advantage over states where the decision has to be filtered not only through the state party but through the state government as well (see Figure 3.2). Part of the

¹⁶ This is not a hard and fast rule, however. Some states have state parties that eschew the state-financed primary as a means of exacting an increased measure of control over who the winner (or the type of winner) will be in the state's delegate selection event. To those parties – the Democrats in Idaho or Republicans in Montana, for example – there is more value placed on the ideological nature of the decision than on the economics of the situation. Often in these situations, the state party also desires a closed caucus in terms of who can participate versus the open primary that the state provides.

issues between state parties and state government has been alleviated in some cases. In Arizona and New Hampshire, the state legislatures have ceded some or all of the authority over the decision concerning frontloading to state officials acting alone. In Arizona, the governor was granted the ability in 2004 to move the state's presidential primary from the fourth Tuesday in February, where it is set by law, to a date that maximizes the state's influence over the nominating process. During the 2004 and 2008 cycles that has meant that Arizona has held its primary on the earliest date allowed by the national parties, the first Tuesday in February. New Hampshire's legislature in 1976 ceded the primary positioning to the secretary of state as a means of protecting its first-in-the-nation primary status. As the calendar has become more frontloaded that has translated into more movement of the New Hampshire primary, and by extension, more power for the person in that position. Again, scenarios where fewer actors are involved in the frontloading decision equates to a less resistant path through which that decision has to be shepherded.

What, though, causes some states to hold an advantage over others when it comes to the decision to move presidential nominating contests to earlier dates? The type (or number) of decision makers, at least on the surface, appears to provide some states with a leg up in terms of the ability to shift the date on which their delegate selection events are held. Yet, despite that distinction, the most traveled path is the one that offers the most resistance for states seeking influence over the nomination process by means of moving to earlier dates – through the state government. It is through that route that a host of issues foreign to states where caucuses and party-run primaries are the traditional means of allocating delegates (and thus states with a limited number of actors involved in the frontloading decision) are introduced. Underlying the situations described above are several possible *structural* explanations for the differing

frontloading abilities across states. Contest type, past movement, past event timing, holding an event on the earliest allowed position, split primaries and the number of other events on the same date all hypothetically have an influence over whether a state has the ability to shift the timing of its delegate selection event. Political, economic and cultural aspects intervene as well, but are hypothesized to have less impact on the frontloading decision than the state-level , structural factors.

The Frontloading Decision-Making Process: Structural Factors

Contest Type

Since state parties have the final say on what a state's primary or caucus date will be, states where caucuses and party-run primaries are the norm are expected to have an easier time repositioning those delegate selection events (Mayer 1996b; Walz and Comer 1999). State legislatures, on the other hand, operating in conjunction with a governor to make the decision concerning a state-run primary would have a more difficult time. Essentially, this is an alternative means of conceptualizing the decision maker idea discussed above. It, however, offers less lines of gradation; a dichotomous categorization versus the four categories discussed in case of the decision makers portion of the theory of frontloading. Again, caucuses fall under the purview of state parties and are accordingly less susceptible to the problems that can plague the primary election route that encompasses state governments. As such:

H1: Caucuses are more likely to be repositioned than primaries.

Decision Makers

While much of the primary/caucus difference implies a difference in decision makers, that relationship is not absolute. Caucuses and conventions remain under the authority of the state parties, but it goes without saying that party-run primaries are outside of the control of state

government. In addition, there are the cases where individual state officials are in control of the frontloading decision. The result is a hierarchy of decision makers. State legislatures and governors acting together have a much more difficult time moving the delegate selection machinery under their control than do state parties in moving their contests (Putnam 2008). However, though state parties are not prone to partisan division (see the explanation of political factors below), they are not immune to faction within their ranks. Such potential fissures make it more challenging, in turn, for state parties to move caucuses and conventions than individuals – like the secretary or state in New Hampshire or the governor in Arizona – entrusted with the same decision for any type of delegate selection event whether primary or caucus. With that said:

H2: Event positions controlled by individual state officials are more easily shifted than those controlled by state parties. Those same events controlled by state parties are more easily moved than those controlled by state governments (state legislatures and governors working in tandem).

Past Movement

While a state's chosen mode of delegate selection, and as an extension, the body or person charged with making the decision to frontload have a bearing on that decision, so too do the past conditions in and actions by the state in that regard. A state, for example, that has moved in the past has signaled both the willingness and ability to move its delegate selection event to either enhance the influence the state has on the nomination process or to protect the influence gained in the previous move. Georgia, for instance, moved to the second Tuesday in March for the 1980 cycle to aid Jimmy Carter's bid to maintain the Democratic nomination. The Peach state kept that position through the 1988 Southern Super Tuesday and then moved again (one week earlier) to have a similar impact on the Democratic nomination in 1992, giving another former southern governor, Bill Clinton, a springboard to the Democratic nomination. That signal, though, is an

important distinction to note. It is indicative of the presence or absence of factors that prevent or have prevented other states from moving likewise. Thus:

H3: A state that has moved its nominating event in the past is a state more likely to move in future cycles.

Past Event Timing

Similarly, a state's nominating contest position in the past has some bearing on whether it will move in the future. A state late in the process is more likely to negatively view the idea of consistently falling after the point at which the nomination has been decided. In other words, states (or the actors making these decisions) value the amount of potential influence they have on the process. Moving to a date ahead of the point at which the nomination could be wrapped up, even if it is to a date on which many other states are holding contests, grants a state the opportunity to have *some* level of influence as opposed to none.

H4: The later an event was in the previous cycle, the more likely such a state is to move that event to an earlier date.

The one caveat to add to the above hypothesis is that this proposition is something of a moving target. Obviously, this idea loses steam over time as more states move to the beginning of the nomination process. As the “earlier is better” mindset evolved on the state level after the McGovern-Fraser reforms, then, a primary calendar with a fairly even distribution of contests, would be more likely to exhibit this pattern of motivation. A calendar such as the one in 2008, though – with two-thirds of the delegates at stake so early in the nomination process – would do a better job of separating the states that were willing and able to move from those that were either unwilling or willing but unable to enact legislation to move the state's delegate selection event. In the event that a calendar like 2008 is the calendar in place, past movement will be the

better indicator of future movement as opposed to past position (see hypothesis 3 for comparison).

Earliest Possible Date/Window Rule

The motivation may be there for later states to move to earlier, but as has been mentioned, is not confined to that group of states. Movement among early states faces one complication, though. The movement involved in the frontloading process depends to a large degree on how wide the window (set by the national parties) is in which contests can be held. In the post-reform era, the first Tuesday in March evolved as the earliest possible point on which all states, excluding Iowa and New Hampshire, could hold nominating contests by 1992 (see Chapter 2 for a broader discussion of the evolution of the window rule). States already at that point could not subsequently shift the dates of their events without the beginning point of the window being moved as well.¹⁷ Over time, as frontloading increased, more states butted up against that boundary. However, the window has not been static over time. It began to encompass February beginning in 1996 (on the Republican side), opening the door to not only later states but those states that had moved previously to move again between 1996 and 2008. The Democrats widened their window to include February contests in 2004 further opening the possibility for a larger array of states to move. There are two ways of conceptualizing this idea:

H5: a) States already positioned on the earliest date allowed by the parties cannot move in subsequent cycles unless the front end of the window is moved to an earlier date as well. **b)** Cycles in which the window has been expanded by one or both parties will witness increased levels of frontloading as compared to cycles in which the beginning point of the window remains unchanged.

¹⁷ Florida and Michigan became the highest profile states to buck the window rule in 2008, moving ahead of the parties' sanctioned February 5 starting date. However, the list of exempt states stretches beyond just Iowa and New Hampshire. For several early, post-reform cycles, the Democratic Party exempted Maine and 2008 also saw the Democrats exempt South Carolina and Nevada as well in an effort to expand the diversity of early primary and caucus voters. There have been other states that sought to challenge Iowa and New Hampshire's primacy over the years (Arizona and Michigan in 1988, Delaware in 1996), but most have been ignored by the candidates following threats from New Hampshire that ignoring the Granite state would hurt the chances of any candidate campaigning in rogue states (Mayer and Busch 2004).

Split Primaries

Shifting the date of a state's primary calls for the alteration of one segment of a law in some cases. In others, it means the state legislature must change several clauses within the existent elections law or draft an entirely new bill. One such difference depends upon whether the state conducts its presidential primaries simultaneously with its primaries for state and local offices (Putnam 2007). A state with that bond severed only needs to alter the line of the state's election law dealing with the date on which the state's presidential primary is held. Conversely, states where the bond between types of primaries is still intact have an alternate decision calculus. They face the decision of moving the entire state primary infrastructure – presidential primaries and the primaries for state and local offices – to an earlier date or splitting the two primaries to hold an all, new, separate presidential primary. Both options come at a cost to either legislators or taxpayers. Moving everything up has ramifications for some upwardly mobile state legislators in states with laws requiring them to step down from one office before seeking another.

Earlier primaries also mean earlier filing deadlines and in some states, if that deadline is in a year other than the year in which the general election is to be held, that triggers the resignation mechanism described above.¹⁸ Those members less confident in their chances of winning election to the higher office are less likely to leave their current position to do so. But those are rather specific restrictions that are not necessarily applied uniformly across all, in this case, primary states. On a much simpler level, state legislators are also somewhat reticent to shift the dates on which their primary elections take place. It is a system the timing of which helped those members attain the office they currently hold. Why fix what isn't broken?

¹⁸ This is how the election law in Texas is crafted.

There is another recourse, however, for states looking to shift the date on which their primary is held. In the other scenario, the cost applies not to state office holders, but to taxpayers instead. The inherent cost is in establishing a newly separate – from the primaries for state and local offices – presidential primary election. The state and its tax base are left with the bill for an all new election. And in some cycles, that cost can be cumbersome enough to ward some states and state legislators away from supporting such a measure.

H6: States with split primaries are more likely to move than states that hold presidential primaries simultaneously with state and local primaries (split vs. concurrent).

This point cannot be understated. In the context of a cost/benefit analysis, the presence or absence of these separate primaries hypothetically serve as a significant roadblock to frontloading. Again, as was described in Chapter 2, the reaction of the states to the McGovern-Fraser reforms initiated this dichotomy: states with concurrent primaries versus states with separate primaries. Early on, then, in the post-reform period, states with post-convention primaries for state and local offices had to make a decision similar to what states with concurrent primaries in place today have to make when confronting the possibility of frontloading: establish a new election for the presidential primary or move the primary for state and local offices to a point prior to the national convention that can also double as a means by which national party delegates can be allocated. Those states that opted for the former avenue early on were, not coincidentally, also the states that subsequently became better able to shift the dates on which their primaries were held. States that delayed that decision – to either separate their primaries or move all primaries forward – ultimately ended up increasing the start-up costs for the separate presidential primary election over time or made moving an election from an entrenched, traditional date more difficult.

The Frontloading Decision-Making Process: Political Factors

Political conditions have received some attention, but because frontloading has been treated as an independent variable for the most part, the true relationship between those factors and the frontloading decision is understated. How, then, do differing political circumstances across the states affect a state's ability (or willingness) to move its delegate selection event to an earlier date?

Unified Parties

Both the type of contest (primary or caucus) and differences in decision makers (state legislature or state party) deal with the full world of options within the frontloading decision. However, over the course of the post-reform era the trend has been toward state government intervention, with primary elections emerging as the dominant method of delegate selection. With more than thirty states utilizing primaries as the means of allocating delegates now, there has been *and is* some variation in the ability of states to move their contests to earlier dates. Partisanship has already been proposed as one of those fault lines. However, its effects are difficult to tease out. Both inter-chamber division within the legislature and inter-branch division among two of the three parts of a state government (executive and legislative) have potentially negative effects on a state's ability to shift its primary date in any positive way (Fiorina 1994; 1996).¹⁹ This division does not hold in all cases, though. In a situation where the move is mutually beneficial to both parties of a divided government – in a year when both parties nominations are being contested, for example – a frontloading move becomes easier. It is also a less challenging task when the party opposite an incumbent president has unified control of the state government. From a rational choice perspective, states in those positions have more

¹⁹ Mayhew (1991) has even argued, to the contrary, that divided government has had no effect on the amount of legislation being passed.

incentive to move their contests as a means of affecting the outcome of their party's nomination. In a situation, then, where both parties' nominations are at stake and no incumbent president is running for reelection, members of both parties within a divided state legislature or divided state government would hypothetically be more likely to tinker with the rules—in this case the date on which the state's primary is held—to advantage their party in the race for the White House (Klinkner 1994, Hagen and Mayer 2000). Preventing the opposite party from gaining an advantage is less of a concern when both parties' nominations are at stake. The environment in which that particular decision to frontload is made potentially switches from one of partisan rancor when one party's nomination is on the line to one of “I'll scratch your back if you'll scratch mine,” when both nominations are being contested. From this emerge two hypotheses:

- H7: a)** Divided governments are less likely to move to earlier dates than unified ones.
- b)** Unified (out party) state governments are more likely to move than divided governments or unified (in party) governments.

Incumbency

In years when an incumbent is running all bets are off; the complexion of the activity at the state governmental level changes. The partisan division returns in divided legislatures or divided state governments, while for states with unified government the frontloading decision remains less strenuous. There is one caveat, though: out parties in unified control of a state government – both the legislature and the governor's mansion – are more apt to change rules than those representing the party of the incumbent president who follow the, “If it ain't broke, don't fix it,” maxim (Klinkner 1994). Therefore, the out party, if they are in unified control of a state government charged with the decision of repositioning their presidential primary, is more likely to proceed with such a move than a state government controlled by the party of the president.

- H8:** “Open seat” races for presidential nominations are more likely to have delegate selection event movement than those contests involving an incumbent.

The Frontloading Decision-Making Process: Economic Factors

Both the structural and political factors are hurdles the states are forced to overcome – to varying degrees – if they intend to move there delegate selection events. While those factors speak to the obstacles that stand in the way of such a move, they fail to adequately explain why states are motivated to move in the first place. This section focuses not just on purely monetary gains, but on benefits states can accrue because they hold early delegate selection events. These are factors that accrue on the benefits side of the ledger as opposed to the structural and political impediments on the costs side. While the latter impact a state's ability to move, the former affect its willingness to shift its delegate selection event to an earlier date.

Candidate/Media Attention

Mayer and Busch (2004) capture this motivational environment best in finding that both candidate spending in and media coverage of states during the presidential primary campaign are higher in those states holding earlier rather than later nominating contests. States, acting rationally, by looking at what is to be gained by going early can compare the spoils won by a similar, early state in the last cycle to their own lack of attention as a means of ascertaining the wisdom of frontloading their nominating event.

H9: States with low attention paid to their contests in the previous cycle are more likely to move to an earlier date to increase that attention in subsequent cycles.

Delegates

The idea above of a state comparing itself to a *similar*, earlier state is one that begs for further explication. States throughout the duration of the frontloaded era, may have been motivated to move to earlier dates to get any piece – not necessarily a bigger piece – of a pie divided between many more states. With more states compressed against the parties' earliest

allowed date on the primary calendar, the strategy is different from the candidates' perspective. On a day like Super Tuesday in 2008, candidates are faced with choosing how to allocate their resources. That certainly includes money, but also the candidates' finite amount of time. They have to choose where to focus given that they cannot be in every state at once. In the end, this often means “size matters.” Within the context of delegate selection event timing, this has most often translated as the size of a state in terms of delegates to the national conventions.

Candidates gravitate toward states that offer the largest prize.

The question, though, is whether there is more pressure for big states to move up than for those less, delegate-rich states. Delegate-rich states like California and New York have a clear interest in moving up. Both are big prizes and would receive attention from the candidates and in the media over smaller states in a frontloaded context. For small states the motivation is less clear, especially given that in a frontloaded system, the likelihood of being lost in the shuffle of a large number of simultaneous contests is greatly increased. Mayer and Busch (2004) found delegation size to have a significant effect on the amount campaign spending and media coverage in the states from 1980 to 1992 – the bigger the state, the more likely a move to an earlier date was. However, Ridout and Rottinghaus (2008) find that the number of delegates a state has is less significant a predictor of campaign advertising in the 2000 and 2004 campaigns in a state than the date on which the nominating contest was held. Though the operationalizations are different in both these studies, it does speak to the divide between the post-reform era prior to California's 1996 shift and after that move. Over time, then, the expectation is that size matters less in the decision-making calculus behind frontloading.

- H10: a)** States with larger delegations to the national conventions are more likely to move their nominating contests to earlier dates than states with smaller delegations.
b) Over the course of the post-reform era, that effect will decrease as states of all sizes jockey for position in the hyper-frontloaded environment.

The Frontloading Decision-Making Process: Cultural Factors

Finally, there are cultural implications that underlie the decision to frontload a presidential primary or caucus as well. Outside of the structural, political and economic factors described above, there are cultural factors, common across some groups of states, that influence the decision to move a delegate selection event to an earlier date.

State Political Culture

One relationship that has received some attention in the context of frontloading is the notion that state political culture affects a state's willingness to move its nominating contest (Carman and Barker 2005). Using Elazar's (1966) trichotomous measure of state political culture – individualistic, moralistic or traditionalistic – Carman and Barker find that states in the moralistic mold (more likely to change or create laws to make government work better for the people it represents) are the states most likely to move their delegate selection events. Lumping these states into these three broad categories, similar to the modest effects of regional categories, serves to deprive the literature on the frontloading decision and elsewhere a more nuanced examination of political culture from state to state (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1987; 1993). This is an important point in the context of frontloading. Several coordinated actions have been undertaken during the post-reform era by states either sharing a border – or borders – or entire regions holding primaries and caucuses simultaneously to increase their overall influence on the process. Most notably, all the states of the former confederacy and several additional border states moved their delegate selection events to the earliest allowed date prior to the 1988 presidential nomination cycle in an effort to influence the Democratic nomination (see Chapter 2 for a broader discussion of this effort). There have, however, been other moves made by regional or subregional groupings of states as well. In 1996, there was not only a Yankee Primary –

comprised of all the northeast states save New Hampshire – but also a Great Lakes Primary that saw Illinois hold its primary in conjunction with those in Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin.

Prior to the 2000 cycle, there was a movement at the state legislative level in several smaller western states, to coordinate a Big Sky Primary (Busch 2000).²⁰ However, once California decided to shift its primary again – as it had ahead of 1996 – from late March to the opening, first Tuesday in March date that the national parties allowed during that cycle, the move by the eight western states was quashed. With California so early – on the date the states involved were looking at coordinating on – the opportunity for those states to collectively have a meaningful impact on the nomination process had come and gone.

Finally, Maryland, Virginia and Washington, DC held simultaneous primaries dubbed the Potomac Primary during the 2008 nomination race. Again, it was a small subregional series of contests that served as the next round of contests in the stalemate that had emerged on the Democratic side immediately following Super Tuesday and helped buttress John McCain's delegate lead in the Republican race. Though this particular series of contests got the attention of the candidates and the media, the regional and subregional primary efforts have had mixed results over time. The Potomac Primary in 2008 and the Southern Super Tuesday in 1988 had an impact the former was fairly muted – achieving only attention – while the latter had the unintended consequence of helping the eventual Republican nominee to emerge. The other efforts, though, have had little or no measurable impact; either being overshadowed or overwhelmed by many other contests being held on the same date or being timed after the point at which the nomination(s) had been decided.

²⁰ The states involved in this effort were Arizona, Colorado, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Utah and Wyoming. Individually, none of the states had ever had a significant effect on a nomination race, but collectively they could offer a contiguous group of states with a similar issue set that candidates could address (Busch 2000).

The problem with using regions or even subregions as an explanation of frontloading behavior – or at least as a rudimentary operationalization of some deeper cultural tie that binds states – is that they do not perform well as predictors of that behavior. And again, using region as a means of capturing cultural aspects on the state level is at best a proxy for a broader culture. It paints the variation across groups of states with a similarly broad brush to Elazar measure Carman and Barker utilized. Based on state-level public opinion, Berry et al. (2007), developed a measure of state political culture as a function of how liberal/conservative and Democratic/Republican a state is. To some extent, this echoes the discussion of the aforementioned political factors, but goes beyond the idea of party competition to encompass the depth to which the ideological/partisan roots run in the states. As such:

- H11:** a) States with a more conservative Republican culture are more likely to move their delegate selection events in years when the Republican nomination is at stake.
b) Conversely, states of the liberal Democratic ilk are more likely to act in years when the Democratic nomination is being contested.
c) States falling in the middle are more likely to frontload their delegate selection event in years when both nominations are on the line.

Neighbors

One other aspect of culture that may influence the decision of a state to move its delegate selection event is the idea of policy innovation and diffusion. This has been examined in the context of the spread of state lottery adoption from state to state and could have implications for the diffusion of the frontloaded delegate selection event as well (Berry and Berry 1990; 1999). If one state shifts its nominating contest to an earlier date, do its neighbors follow suit either in the same cycle or in subsequent cycles? This builds on the regionalism/subregionalism discussed above. Individual states, then, may have some influence by moving to earlier dates, but neighboring states may be motivated to not only move up but to coincide with the state that initially moved to maximize each state's influence.

H12: States bordering other state which have moved to earlier dates in the past are more likely to adopt a similar delegate selection event move themselves.

The Frontloading Decision

With these factors laid out, the basic theory that has emerged is one that hinges on the idea of a cost/benefit analysis. Those states with substantially more costs – structural and political impediments – tend to stand pat on the date on which their current delegate selection event rests. In other words, the costs outweigh the benefits of moving, thus impacting the decision makers' ability and/or willingness to move the event. It is hypothesized here that this differs across states most notably because different states have different decision makers behind any frontloading action and also because of structural/legal constraints like whether the presidential primary is coupled with the state's primaries for state and local offices.

To fully examine these relationships a two-pronged approach will be undertaken. Owing to the fact that the number of primaries has proliferated over the course of the post-reform era, one model will be constructed in Chapter 4 to look specifically at the decision-making environment within states utilizing primary elections as a means of allocating national convention delegates.²¹ The growth in the number of primaries is not the sole reason for developing a separate model. A separate model for primary states is necessary to fully examine the impact of the split primaries variable. The effects of that structural obstacle would be overstated in a model that included party-run primaries and caucuses. Those contests are separate from the contests that nominate candidates for state and local offices. To fully assess the effect of these split primaries on the frontloading decision-making process, it is necessary to explore the phenomenon in the environment in which it is most influential; where the state government is involved in the decision-making calculus. A full model will then be assembled in

²¹ By the 2008 cycle the number of caucuses had dwindled to less than fifteen in each party. Increasingly, the decision to shift the date on which a nominating contest is held is made within the state governmental context.

Chapter 5 that will investigate the effects of the above array of factors across the full range of delegate selection events and decision makers. Together, both models will provide a more robust explanation of why some states have been able to move their nominating contests to earlier dates in the time since the McGovern-Fraser reforms were instituted and other states have either been unwilling and/or unable to do likewise.

Chapter 4. State Governments and the Frontloading Decision

Over the last forty years, as was shown in earlier, the playing field on which presidential nominations are contested has changed dramatically. The movement of individual state primaries and caucuses to earlier dates on the nomination calendar has not only altered where and how many states in which candidates have to campaign, but also the time period in which they are required to compete. The candidates have been forced to cast their nets farther much quicker than ever before. Also, the window of time in which primaries are contested has inched ever closer to the beginning of the election year in the time since the nomination system was reformed, while still officially ending during the first week of June. As the beginning of the nomination process has expanded from late February (with most contests being distributed fairly evenly across March, April and May) in 1976 to the very beginning of January in 2008 for instance, the number of states clustering their primaries and caucuses at the beginning of the process has increased as well. Again, the question that guides this research is why is it that some states move their selection processes forward and others do not?

This is the question that underlies the frontloading decision, but has yet to be completely examined within the literature. In this chapter, the focus will be on explaining the frontloading decision in states employing the most prevalent mode of delegate selection, the primary. The use of primaries as the means of allocating national convention delegates proliferated in the post-reform era, yet represent a path to frontloading that is rife with obstacles that are unique to primary states. Still, there is some variation across states in terms of both their willingness and ability to shift the dates on which their contests are conducted. The first step in this process is to determine whether the incentives that entice states to move actually cause them to propose a change to the election law that would bring about that change in the primary date. And as was

hypothesized in an earlier chapter, there is something of a costs/benefits analysis at work among the state-level decision makers – in this case the state government – based on the differential between the incentives to frontload and the potential structural and political deterrents. That affects a state's ability to shift its primary. Where the deterrents outweigh the incentives, a state will be prevented from moving to an earlier date, while states where the incentives are higher than the costs will be more likely to shift their primaries to more advantageous positions.

On the incentives end of the spectrum, Mayer and Busch have found that the dates on which presidential primaries and caucuses are held is highly correlated with the money spent by candidates in those states during the 1980, 1984 and 1988 primary seasons—controlling for the number of delegates, the presence of Iowa and New Hampshire, and the mode of delegate selection (primary or caucus) (2004). The resulting model shows that moving the date of a primary or caucus translates into an increase of \$4000 to \$12,000 per state for every day the selection event is moved up the calendar.²² In other words, the argument is that candidate spending—or media coverage for that matter—is dependent on where a primary is placed on the calendar. This, however, only implies something similar to an endless cycle of repositioning going on between the candidates/media and the states from cycle to cycle. All the while, by not accounting for either the state governments making the decisions to move or the subsequent movement between elections, the model fails to directly explain why frontloading is occurring. The result is an underspecified model that does not have the frontloading decision as its dependent variable.

While a governor may propose moving a state's primary to an earlier date, the typical decision makers in this process are the state legislatures operating under the guidelines the

²² Mayer and Busch (2004). Table 3-4 *Effects of Primary or Caucus Date on Total Campaign Spending per State, 1980-1988*, pp. 32-3.

national parties set for primary sequencing. Given these party guidelines, rational state legislatures – in primary states – then decide whether to move their state’s delegate selection event based upon the costs/benefits analysis described above. This research will attempt to determine that state legislatures opt first to propose a frontloading move if the incentives to do so are sufficiently high and to then move when those benefits of moving outweigh the costs of moving. If on the other hand, the costs are higher, the state hold the primary in place. The decisions of the various state legislatures are paramount when considering when primaries are held during the presidential primary season; something dealt with only tangentially in previous literature.

Research Question & Theory – State Governments

Why is it that states are moving their various delegate selection events to earlier dates on the nomination calendar? The consensus is that states move in order to subsequently influence the nomination outcome and to gain the attention of both the candidates and the media.²³ If a state votes after all but one candidate has been winnowed from the field or after the point at which one candidate has gained enough delegates to effectively wrap up the nomination, then the voters of that state have, in effect, no influence on the outcome of the parties’ nominations. Furthermore, states are motivated to seek the economic and intangible benefits that candidates and the media bring to an earlier and/or competitive primary.²⁴ Both delegate-rich and delegate-

23 It is instructive at this point to make one distinction in this paper. M&B (2004) use the candidate and his staff as the decision makers in their model because candidate spending is dependent upon the date of a state’s delegate selection event. In this paper, I treat the state legislatures as the ultimate decision makers. However, the argument can be made that the candidates move first in the game by spending more time and money in earlier rather than later primaries and that those states not already positioned early then move their primaries to earlier dates in response. In that scenario however, it is the states movement that is dependent on the candidate’s spending. This implies that the state legislatures are the real decision makers in the frontloading process and that their motivation should be more closely examined.

24 In the frontloaded system, early and competitive primaries are virtually the same. Whereas in the 1972-1984 period nominations contests were competitive into May and June, those contests of the frontloaded era are typically only competitive early (2008 is an exception.). However, the compression of frontloading causes only

poor states have moved to earlier dates since the McGovern-Fraser reforms were instituted.

However, not all states have moved up. Why is this?

It is argued here that the various state governments go through a costs/benefits analysis in order to decide whether to move a primary to an earlier date. However, the state legislature is only part of a much more complex environment in which the nomination campaign is played. As Aldrich (1980) states, “the institution of party nominations—the rules, laws, procedures and norms that describe how presidential hopefuls become presidential nominees—plays a major role in structuring the politics of nominations and, consequently, in the behavior of candidates and the outcome of their campaigns.” Thus a state government – the legislature and governor either working together or against each other – both helps shape these rules and makes decisions based on the rules outside their realm (the national party rules). The norms of the nomination campaign give the states a window in which to hold delegate selection events for the parties’ national conventions. That typically included a range for non-exempt states between the first couple of weeks of March and the beginning of June in the 1970s through the presidential election cycles of the 1990s. A shift by the Republican Party to allow February contests in 1996 spread across parties by 2004 and culminated with an unprecedented logjam of contests clustered at the beginning of February and included January primaries.

The nomination calendars of the two election cycles during the 1970s set the stage for the back and forth between the candidates/media and the states because these two elections proved to be the acclimation period for all sides as they learned to navigate the playing field on which the nomination game would be played in the post-reform era. Early on, Iowa and New Hampshire established that being first was decidedly advantageous. Both have traditionally served as the first states to filter the pool of candidates for the nomination and thus have the first opportunity

those delegate-rich and niche/gateway states to be attractive to the candidates/media, and thus competitive.

to shape the outcome of the race. Obviously those states with the last opportunity in this filtration process stand a good chance of having very little to filter. In other words, the voters of those states have little or no choice in the nomination as it has been decided in the primaries and caucuses near the beginning of the calendar.

None of this was lost on the candidates or the media. The strategy of the candidates was to succeed early on and, if not win, avoid being winnowed out. If a candidate was not the frontrunner—and thus most at risk of being winnowed—it was imperative to finish at or above the level of expectations set prior to the event in order to survive to the next round. If the frontrunner continued winning, he could coast to the nomination. Not many candidates did coast to the nomination, but as the system became more frontloaded, it became clear that frontrunners could more quickly and easily wrap up the nomination.²⁵ The momentum of successive early victories overwhelmed not only the competition but the voters as well. In the compressed environment frontloading created, the voters got little more information from the media than the horse race coverage (Geer 1986, Brady & Johnston 1987). As a result, voters had little

25 At this stage, it should be mentioned that the contrast between the nomination battles of 1976-1984 and those of 1988-present. The 1976-1984, frontloading period, witnessed intense nomination fights that lasted deep into May if not into June. Carter outlasted the first wave of Harris, Udall and Jackson in the 1976 campaign and Brown (once he entered) in a second wave that lasted into June. Likewise, in that same year Ford and Reagan went all the way to the Republican convention before that nomination was settled. 1980 saw a prolonged and bitter battle between incumbent Carter and challenger Ted Kennedy on the Democratic side and a multi-candidate race on the Republican side that ended up being a battle lasting into May between Reagan and Bush. Similarly, in 1984 Mondale and Hart waged a battle for the Democratic nomination that like the one in 1980 lasted into May before being resolved. The picture here is of a system that nurtures at least a two man race into the waning weeks of the nomination season.

In 1988 and beyond however, the picture began to change. The dramatic frontloading that the southern Super Tuesday created, began to distort what had been established in the election years since reform. Vice President Bush effectively solidified his claim to the 1988 Republican nomination in March after sweeping Super Tuesday, while Dukakis pulled away from the Democratic field in April. In 1992, like 1984, only the Democratic nomination was at stake. Clinton like his predecessor became the presumptive nominee in April. 1996 was more frontloaded than 1992 and, with California offering so many delegates so early in one event, Dole finished off his competition and took the nomination at the end of March. California moved up again in 2000, placing its primary on the first Tuesday in March alongside a host of other events. The nominations of both parties were wrapped up after this broadside of contests. 2004 was only slightly different from 2000 in that it had more contests in February (in both parties), leading up to a less crowded Super Tuesday during the first week in March. What can be gleaned from this is that once the massive frontloading of 1988 was introduced, the nomination game was altered significantly.

opportunity to learn about the candidates and make informed decisions. Frontloading not only progressively limits voters' choices by more quickly winnowing the challengers, but also has the potential to limit their decision to a choice between the candidate who is the seemingly inevitable nominee and the challengers who increasingly seem to have no chance. The electorate also has less opportunity to vet the frontrunner prior to the nomination. Anything that failed to come to light during the increasingly quick nomination campaign that then surfaced in the lead up to the general election could also harm the candidate and the party's chances in the general election. These scenarios place unbelievable pressure on the candidates to win early, but also, by limiting the voters' choices, run contrary to the intentions of the McGovern-Fraser reforms.

Both the candidates and the media knew early in the post-reform period that the early contests were where the real battle was being waged. In the years after reform, more and more states also came to recognize the fact that being earlier was better than later in the nomination process. The Democratic-dominated state legislatures of the south had talked about coordinating an effort to hold a simultaneous southern primary since the mid-1970s. The legislatures of Georgia and Alabama moved their primaries up to align them with Florida's second Tuesday in March primary for the 1980 season—a move intended to potentially aid incumbent president Carter by counteracting any advantage his challenger, Ted Kennedy, would have in the early contests in the northeast. While this move created a slightly more frontloaded calendar in 1980 than in 1976, it served to alleviate some of the crowding during May. However, it did send a clear signal to the rest of the southern states: moving primaries can be done and can have some influence on the nomination. After watching 1984 pass, ending in another crushing presidential defeat for the Democrats, the Southern Legislative Conference (still dominated by Democratic state legislators) decided to go through with the plan to coordinate their states' primaries in 1988.

The goals were to influence the Democratic nomination—hopefully resulting in a more moderate-to-conservative nominee who could appeal to the voters of the South, bringing more attention to regionally-specific issues through increased media coverage and increasing the economic benefits of holding a primary. Though most of this plan backfired, instead helping the Republican Party, it changed the landscape of nomination politics through increased frontloading (Hadley and Stanley 1989).

Perception is everything and the southern states' synchronized move in 1988 signaled to the rest of the state legislatures that states could coordinate their efforts by moving their primary dates in an attempt to have more influence in the process—even, if in fact, Super Tuesday 1988 did not live up to its purpose. As Gurian (1992) has shown, media coverage actually decreased for many of the southern states between 1984 and 1988.

It was apparent after 1988 that frontloading was an attractive option for states and would be a future component of nomination campaigns. What, however, were the factors that influenced the decision makers to actually move their states' presidential primaries? The six election cycles from 1988 to the present offer an opportunity to observe the period when the frontloading trend greatly expanded, and further allows for an examination of the variables that figured into the state legislatures' decisions to move or not move presidential primaries. The three elections prior to 1988 will serve as the baseline of what the calendar was like prior to the full scale introduction of frontloading. Again, the state governments are the ultimate decision makers in this process and if the examination is one revolving around the idea of why frontloading has occurred in primary states, taking into account of the conditions under which they make this decision is essential. To this point however, the state-level perspective has not been considered in the literature, and without contemplating the decision-making processes,

political science can only claim to know part of the motivating force behind the frontloading trend. Again, it is argued here that the state governments in the United States go through a costs/benefits analysis to determine whether the presidential primary in that state should or could be moved. Is it beneficial to the state to move its primary or are the costs too high?

To answer this, the legislatures, acting rationally and serving as the nexus of the frontloading decision, must examine several things. First among them is where the state primary was on the calendar—early or late—in the previous cycle. If the state primary is already early, should/could it be earlier, or if it is in the middle of the calendar or later, is it worth it to move into competition with all the other early states at the risk being ignored by the candidates and the media? Furthermore to this point, are states already scheduled as early as is allowed by the two national parties? Also, are the state’s presidential primaries and the primaries for other state and local offices held on the same date or at different times, and does that affect movement? Finally, how much media attention and candidate spending did a state receive in the previous election and could that be improved by moving to an earlier date? If the improvement is markedly greater, the move may be appropriate, but if it is only moderately altered for the better, the change may not be worth it. These latter incentives – what are called economic factors here - - are the benefits of moving while the split primaries concept represents two of the several structural factors that can serve as impediments to the frontloading decision.

Splitting Presidential and State/Local Primaries

Much of what guides the decision making—before even the monetary costs and benefits are considered—is whether the state’s presidential primary and the primaries for state and local offices are held simultaneously. This is another important distinction to make and one that has not been dealt with at any great length in the extant literature. Whether these state/local and

presidential primaries are divided, it is hypothesized, has significant implications for the state government's ability to move its primary forward. A separate election for the presidential primary requires the state to finance another election altogether. Those start-up costs affect the motivation and preferences of the members of the legislature. The act of splitting the two has some ramifications as well. Those states that have split presidential and state/local primaries have a greater ability to move this separate presidential primary to an earlier date than those states that hold the two simultaneously and face the task of either having to move both to an earlier date or having to break with state-level tradition and split the two.²⁶

The structural aspects described in Chapter 3 begin to have some impact on the legislature's decision making at this point. If a state falls in the category of having separate primaries, the costs of moving the presidential primary to an earlier date is minimal. Georgia, for example, fits this description. Since 1980, Georgia has held an early March presidential primary while typically having a July primary for state and local offices. The legislature in Georgia moved the state's presidential primary from May to March in 1980 and for 1992 moved it from the second week in March to the first week in March. Having separate primaries grants states a greater ability to move without incurring the financial cost of funding an entirely separate presidential primary. Contrast the situation in Georgia with states like New Jersey and California. Those two states hold both types of primaries together and until 1996 actually held these primaries on the first week in June—the final week of the primary season. In 1996, California's legislature had had enough of being used as a center of fundraising for the candidates and not seeing much of the money when the state's presidential primary finally rolled

26 On this point, it should once again be noted that state-level convenience for states with early (April, May and June) state and local primaries made combining a presidential primary with the other primaries the most efficient means through which reform could be achieved. Over time, though, that act put those states at a disadvantage in terms of moving the date on which their primaries were held in subsequent cycles.

around (Busch 2000). The solution was to move all the state's primaries to the final Tuesday in March 1996. The Golden State shifted to an earlier date again in 2000 (the first week in March) and followed the majority of other states to February 5, 2008.²⁷ New Jersey, meanwhile, stuck with its early June primary date until 2008, opting to avoid the substantial start-up costs associated with either splitting their presidential and state/local primaries or moving them all to an earlier date and thus away from the traditional June date. If the theory proposed is correct, New Jersey was deterred from moving or splitting their primaries because the costs outweighed the benefits until the 2008 cycle. For California, the benefits were greater, earlier than in New Jersey.

Candidate Spending and Media Attention

Finally, the rational state government would have to consider past candidate spending/attention and media coverage in their state when determining whether moving the state's presidential primary is prudent. Both are discussed in the same section because they are both so closely linked in the nomination campaign. As stated earlier, there is a natural tendency for the media to follow the candidates and, similarly, for the candidates to appear where the media will be. Whether one or the other is the way the relationship actually occurs is not as important as the fact that both aspects of the attention paid to states work hand in hand to shape not only the nomination outcomes, but the sequencing of presidential primaries in subsequent election years.

First, as for candidate spending, it is hypothesized that the rationally-acting legislatures examine how much candidates have spent in the state's primary in the past in an attempt to

²⁷ The difference with the 2008 move by California is that the state legislature opted to sever the bond between the presidential primaries and those for state and local offices for the first time. While the presidential primary was scheduled for the first Tuesday in February, the primaries for state and local offices were moved back to the traditional first Tuesday in June date they had occupied prior to the frontloading moves in 1996 and 2000.

ascertain if, by moving the state's primary to an earlier date, they can entice the candidates to spend more money in that [earlier] primary. Further, it should be noted that the legislators are not concerned with the number of candidates or the number of parties with contested nominations in future campaigns. These are factors that are out of the control of the legislatures and change from election to election. What they are interested in is the percentage of the total, nationwide amount of spending in their state. Can moving the state's primary to an earlier date net the state more money or a lot more money? If it means a lot more money then the decision might already be made. Legislators, it could be hypothesized are also interested in getting the candidates to address issues important to the state that, in turn, could help them in their own electoral pursuits; riding on the coattails of successful primary contestants. This is a byproduct of candidate spending, but one that could potentially figure into the legislature's costs/benefits analysis.

Some of the same above factors are applicable to the discussion of media coverage as well. State legislatures want not just more coverage, but a lot more coverage to make moving the state's primary worthwhile. In order to get the desired effect several things have to fall into place. The primary obviously has to be early enough that the nomination is still competitive and the outcome does not appear inevitable. Early though may not be enough. The media will only cover what is perceived to be a big prize on any early date. Most of the time, but not always, the winning combination is being both early and delegate-rich. This is why California's decision to move in time for the 1996 primary season seemed like a no-brainer. The most delegate-rich state would obviously be motivated to be early in order to get the attention the legislature felt it deserved. New Hampshire and Iowa are not delegate-rich but they have an advantage because

they are the first delegate selection events.²⁸ Even if a state is not delegate-rich, it may be able to find a niche in the calendar to exploit. Being delegate-rich is important for media coverage but often not unique. South Carolina, as mentioned in a previous section, has, for the last several nomination cycles, held the first delegate selection event in the South. It is a unique story because it indicates how the rest of the region may vote and further whether the winning candidate may have enough appeal to win a region that, for the most part, votes as a bloc in the general election.

Again, frontloading has altered the way that information is filtered through the media. When the primaries were more dispersed across the calendar, the competition lasted longer, but so too did the media's interest. Thus, the media was able to provide more valuable information over a much greater time span. As the calendars became more compressed in subsequent elections though media interest in the primaries waned in correspondence to the progressively, more quickly resolved nomination battles (Mayer and Busch 2004). To state legislatures, increasing frontloading meant that holding late presidential primaries resulted in decreasing media coverage over the five election cycles between 1976 and 1992 (Mayer and Busch 2004).

Additional Factors

While the above are factors that can be hypothesized to figure into the rationally-acting state government's costs/benefits analysis and can be manipulated by moving a state's presidential primary, there are other factors that have important implications for the decision, yet are not as easily manipulated by the movement of a primary. Like the split primaries concept, there are several other structural and political impediments to deter states from making a

²⁸ New Hampshire state law protects its first in the nation status. In addition, both parties have, for the most part, protected New Hampshire and Iowa as the first primary and caucus states respectively. The Republicans, for example, allowed early caucuses in Louisiana and Alaska prior to Iowa and New Hampshire during the 1996 campaign. During the time period examined here though (and up to the present), no primary has been held before New Hampshire's.

frontloading decision. Additionally, there are a couple of cultural variables that, while not necessarily preventing or motivating a move, could color the decision to frontload as well. Finally, in addition to media coverage and candidate spending, the effects of a state's delegation size on the state government's decision to move the state's primary are considered among the "economic" incentives that motivate states to move. Delegate-rich states, it is hypothesized here, would have the most incentive to move forward, but delegate-poor states are motivated to move forward as well if only to avoid handing their voters a meaningless choice. The chance, though, of affecting the process is far smaller for these delegate-poor states.

Though these economic factors are important for establishing the incentive structure underlying the frontloading decision, a wide array of structural and political influences may actually prove to be more significant in terms of setting conditions that are conducive to a move to an earlier date. At the very least, these factors may prove to separate the haves from the have nots in terms of the states that have been able to move during the post-reform era. From a political standpoint, divided government – both inter-chamber and inter-branch – serves as a possible roadblock to frontloading. That maneuvering is easier if one party is in control of both houses of the state legislature, but what if control is split between the parties? Divided government within the legislature makes moving primaries forward difficult because the party of the incumbent president would not necessarily be motivated to help the challenging party if victory in the state's primary gave momentum to a candidate who could threaten that incumbent. In that scenario, compromise could hypothetically only be reached when both parties' nominations are at stake and thus there is no incumbent involved. The same holds true for division between the legislative branch and the executive branch. If the governor is of the

opposite party as the legislature, he or she would, again, not necessarily be motivated to come to the aid of the legislature or influence the opposite party's nomination process.

There are also two related factors that will be analyzed. The first, alluded to above, is presidential incumbency. The presence of an incumbent changes the outlook of a nomination campaign, and may have an effect on what certain legislatures decide to do about moving their state's primary. The underlying principle is the same: Republican legislatures, it is hypothesized, would seek to help Republican challengers and Democratic-controlled legislatures would attempt to give their party's presidential aspirants an advantage against a Republican incumbent. Secondly, if, as is argued here, state legislatures factor incumbency into their frontloading decision-making calculus, then the party in control of the White House becomes another aspect which they would potentially consider. As became clear in discussing the control of state legislatures, the party in control of the presidency is important. Only the party out of power in the White House would seek to tweak the rules and sequencing of the nomination process to bring about a change in power (Klinkner 1994). Thus state legislatures with unified control by the party outside of the White House would seek to alter the sequencing of primaries more often than those legislatures dominated by the incumbent president's party.

Political encumbrances are only part of this decision-making calculus, however. In addition to the distinction between states with and without split primaries and to the value of the status of possessing the only delegate selection event on a particular date, there are other structural factors that could encourage or deter a state from opting to shift its presidential primary to an earlier date. Obviously, as is the case in New Hampshire and Arizona, if the decision to move the state's primary is in the hands of one individual as opposed to the executive and legislative branches of the state government, the resistance to shifting the date on which the

primary is scheduled is an act with far fewer potential entanglements.²⁹ Those instances are limited in number, but states with those circumstances are hypothesized to have an advantage over those states in which the state government holds the power of primary scheduling. The former is better able to move than the latter.

Beyond that, when a primary was scheduled in a previous cycle has an impact on when the state government – or other decision maker – will schedule the primary in the next cycle. Relatedly, it is hypothesized that states that have moved in the past are more likely to move in a subsequent cycle, but that is condition to some extent by national party rules governing when states can hold events. If, in other words, a state is already positioned as early as is allowed, then it cannot move without breaking the national party rules for delegate selection.³⁰ Lastly, in years in which the national parties have opened the window of time in which non-exempt states can hold primaries, it is expected that more decisions to frontload would be made.

Finally, there are a couple of cultural factors that may make a state or group of states more likely to decide to frontload. Both state citizen ideology and government ideology as measures of state political culture are factors that might drive the decision to frontload as is the movement in states surrounding the state in question. The rationale there is if a state around your state moves, then hypothetically, a frontloading decision becomes more likely.

29 In New Hampshire, the secretary of state has the authority to make the frontloading decision. The rationale behind that is that individual occupying that office is far better equipped to make that decision quickly to preserve the state's first-in-the-nation status. As for Arizona, the governor has been granted the power over the last two cycles to move the date of the state's primary to a more advantageous position if, given his or her discretion, the state's current position is judged to be outside of the part of the primary calendar where the nomination races are expected to remain competitive.

30 There have been attempts to defy the rules in the past with regard to New Hampshire's favored position, but Florida and Michigan in 2008 stand as the starkest examples of violations of the window rule. Though, it should be noted that Wyoming, Florida, South Carolina, New Hampshire and Michigan were all sanctioned by the Republican Party for where their contests were held in 2008. Iowa and Nevada escaped based on the fact that the first step in each state's caucus process did not allocate any delegates to the national convention directly. That was not the case in the other states and was thus a violation of the party's rules.

Data & Methods

As has been detailed in the sections above, many factors figure into a state government's decision on whether to move the state's presidential primary forward. Outside of this however, there are other considerations. States obviously have to meet several criteria to be considered for inclusion in this analysis. For instance, states had to have held at least two consecutive primaries during the 1976-2008 election period. Change could not be ascertained otherwise. In addition, only those states with state-run—state-financed—primaries appear. States like South Carolina and Utah are excluded because the presidential primaries in those states are party-run. Thus, the state parties and not the state legislatures are making the decision as to whether to move the primary. Under that scenario, the decision-making calculus is altered. This is out of line with what is being investigated in this chapter. Similarly, Nebraska is withheld from the analysis because a nonpartisan, unicameral legislature makes the presidential primary decisions. The dynamic between the controlling party (or parties) in the state legislature and presidential incumbency/party-in-control of the White House is absent, warranting the state's exclusion.

Having set those parameters, there are 62 state/year groups serving as the units of analysis. There are more than 50 state/years in the analysis for two reasons. First, states that have transitioned from a caucus to a primary system across this time period start out being split into Democratic and Republican decision-makers since the state parties initially held the authority to shift the date on which the state's delegate selection event is scheduled. Secondly, some of the states in the transition category and several other additional states have state-funded primaries for one party and party-funded primaries or caucuses for the other party's nomination.³¹ In both cases, it is necessary to think of the state contest Rationally-acting state

³¹ Idaho, for example, has traditionally held a late May primary. The state Republican Party has always used this contest as its means of allocating national convention delegates while Democrats in the state have opted to hold

legislatures in those states, as has been hypothesized previously, act in a manner consistent with a cost/benefit analysis in order to determine the prudence of moving the state's presidential primary. In doing so, these legislatures examine the above factors from previous elections and, most importantly, at the election directly prior to the future primary they are trying to set. In other words, if the state legislature of North Carolina, for example, is looking at potentially moving the state's presidential primary forward in 1988, they will look at the 1984 numbers for the date on which the primary was held, candidate spending, media coverage, share of total delegates, whether the state moved in a previous cycle, and if the state's neighbors moved . Based on that data, the state government will determine whether, first, a proposal should be made and then if the benefits of moving outweigh the costs, whether the frontloading decision should be made.

For the purposes of this analysis, the motivation of state governments to move their presidential primaries to earlier dates in subsequent nomination cycles is being examined. As such, this decision—whether to move the presidential primary—is the dependent variable. That decision is measured in two phases. First, was there a proposal made to frontload the state's presidential primary? Were the incentives great enough to trigger a state legislative proposal to alter the timing. This dependent variable is operationalized as a dichotomous variable where either a proposal was made (1) or was not made (0). If the incentives were sufficiently high, then, was a bill passed and thus a decision made to shift the date on which the presidential primary would be held? This second phase – the actual frontloading decision – is operationalized as a dummy variable, coded 1 for moving forward, and 0 otherwise. The primary movement decisions of the states in the sample are dependent upon the costs/benefits analyses rationally-acting state governments would use as well as the aforementioned factors outside their control.

earlier, party-funded caucuses instead.

Again, the first step in the frontloading decision-making process is to investigate whether the incentives of great enough value to the state governmental decision makers in primary states as to cause a bill proposal to be made. Data on state legislative proposals made to shift the date of primaries to earlier positions was collected for the periods leading up to the 2004 and 2008 presidential election cycles. Though that provides an incomplete picture of the variation of frontloading proposals submitted over the entire post-reform era, those two cycles do offer the opportunity to assess any trends across different types of elections – one involving an incumbent and one without. The objective, again, is to determine the extent to which the economic incentives – candidate spending/attention and a state's delegate-richness – explain the variation in whether a bill was proposed in any given state. A time series cross-sectional logistic regression was constructed using the dichotomous measure for incidence of proposals described above as the dependent variable.

Among the independent variables, the candidate spending variable is derived from Federal Elections Commission reports either directly for the 1980-1988 cycles or indirectly through Aldrich (1980) for the 1976 Republican candidates and Gurian for the 1976 Democratic candidates and for the 1992 cycle.³² With the candidate spending variable operationalized as the percentage of total candidate spending in each of the primary states during this time span, this analysis avoids findings that may simply be the result of the effects of either inflation or the spending differences between the parties. It also avoids questions concerning the number of candidates contesting the nominations and the possible effect that has on the results. Obviously, if there are more candidates in the race, there is a potential for greater spending. However, utilizing the percentage in this case allows for a glimpse at candidate spending regardless of the

³² This data was provided by Paul-Henri Gurian, associate professor in the Department of Political Science at the University of Georgia.

number of candidates. State legislatures, when looking at a state's past performance in this area, would be looking not at how much was spent and by how many candidates, but at what their state's share of the nation's total was. Total national spending and the number of candidates may vary from election to election, but are out of the control of the state legislatures. Both are, nonetheless, important factors that can be controlled for by using the percentage of total candidate spending.

This, however, only covers candidate spending for the first five cycles of the period covered in the full analysis. The constrained analysis for proposals requires data from the most recent two cycles. The remainder of the candidate spending data over the most recent three cycles (1996-2004) was obtained in a different manner. As with the data from 1976-1992, the spending data for 1996-2004 was derived from Federal Elections Commission reports. Given changes to the requirements for candidate financial reporting following the 1992 cycle and the fact that the 1996 cycle began in earnest the trend toward candidates opting out of the FEC matching funds system during the primary phase of the campaign, the available spending data offer an imperfect picture of spending in those cycles (Corrado and Gouvea 2004). However, recent literature in the area has begun utilizing different measures of candidate attention to states. Ridout and Rottinghaus (2008) borrowed from Shaw (2006) the idea of using candidate visits and advertising buys in each state during the primary campaign as a means of operationalizing candidate attention. That data for the 2000 and 2004 cycles was regressed on the overlapping candidate spending data from the same years as a means of bridging this data with the FEC spending data. The Ridout and Rottinghaus values – the averaged percentage of candidate ad buys and visits – were then plugged into the resulting regression coefficients in an effort to predict the spending values for those cycles where the data were incomplete. This provides a

more robust measure of candidate attention to states in the cycles prior to 2004 and 2008.

One issue relevant to candidate spending that has been addressed elsewhere—and should be addressed within this context—is the change the FEC made prior to the 1992 election. Essentially, the FEC exempted several categories of spending from the state expenditure limits, including advertising (Corrado and Gouvea 2004). While Corrado and Gouvea contend that this made the candidate spending per state figure less reliable for 1992 and thereafter, those spending categories that were not exempted, while obviously less than the totals from previous elections, still reflect the same basic spending differences between early and late primaries as the previous figures that include advertising; especially when bridged with the Ridout and Rottinghaus data.

The operationalization for a state's delegation size is seemingly straightforward, but to get a true measure of the delegate-richness of any state in a given election year, an adjustment has to be made to account for the discrepancy in the numbers of delegates each party grants the states. The importance lies not in the equation the parties use to determine the numbers, but that there is an almost two to one difference between the delegate totals of Democrats and Republicans. This problem was overcome in much the same fashion as the problems associated with the candidate spending and media coverage variables: The percentage of the total number of delegates in each state for each party taken and then the two percentages (Democratic and Republican) were averaged to create an average percentage of delegate-richness in each state. This pseudo-standardization controls for the differences in the parties' totals and allows for a proper examination of the effects of this variable on the state legislatures' decisions to move their states' presidential primaries.

The multivariate pooled time series logistic regression model for proposals indicates that a state's delegate-richness was a significant indicator of a state legislatures' propensity to make

frontloading proposals during the time leading up to the 2004 and 2008 presidential primary races. Stated differently, the more delegate rich a state was, the more likely it was to have had a frontloading proposal submitted in its legislature by an odds ratio factor of 1.4. And though the attention variable did not reach statistical significance at the .05 level, it approached that level attaining significance at the .10 level. The results on this variable were also in the predicted direction: that the lower a state's share of attention in the previous presidential election cycle, the more motivated state legislative actors – the frontloading decision makers – would be to propose a change to the existing election law regarding presidential primaries. The economic incentives, then, appear to have at least some impact on the frontloading decision makers' willingness to shift the date on which their delegate selection events are held, at least in limited time frame in which the effects were observed. However, do the structural, political and cultural factors encourage or deter a state government's ability to pass and implement that proposal?

Table 4.1: Impact of Incentives on State Willingness to Frontload (2000-2008)

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
% Delegates	0.3470 **		0.2139	1.4148
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Attention	-0.2436 *		0.1138	0.7838
Percentage of national attention received in previous cycle.				
		N = 85	X ² = 6.76	P = 0.034
* < .10	** < .05	*** < .01		

To fully examine that question, a model using the actual frontloading decision as the dependent variable will be developed using the factors described above as explanatory variables. The same time series cross-sectional logistic regression model used to explain the state-level frontloading proposals will again be utilized in this instance, as the dependent variable is also dichotomous. Given the data constraints posed by the spending variable, there will be two

models. One will take advantage of not only the 1976-1992 spending data discussed above, but will also incorporate the Gurian and Haynes (1993) media coverage data. That will yield a more robust measure of attention for explaining the variation in frontloading decision making during the 1976-1996 span. However, a fuller model that will account for the frontloading decision made for the entire 1976-2008 period will drop the media variable (It only runs from 1976-1992.) and will instead use the bridged candidate spending/attention variable constructed previously for the model on frontloading bill proposals.³³

The media coverage variable for that first model is operationalized as the percentage of total national media coverage in each state during the elections between 1976 and 1992. The data for 1984-1992 are based on the number of square inches of *New York Times* and *Washington Post* front page news coverage multiplied by the number of times the state was mentioned in any campaign-related stories (1 January through 15 June) (Gurian 1993, Gurian and Haynes 1993).³⁴

For 1976 nomination campaign, Aldrich's (1980) media coverage numbers were utilized. Aldrich arrives at his operationalization by separately dividing the number of stories in the *New York Times* and *Washington Post* by the number of active candidates. In transforming this data for use here, the states' numbers of stories for both papers were totaled across each paper. The proportions of this total were then calculated for each state for both papers and averaged to get the percentage of total news coverage per state in the 1976 nomination campaign. The data for

33 Both models will use the same operationalization of the size of a state's delegation to the national conventions as the model to test for the willingness of state legislators to propose a frontloading bill. This is the best means of measuring a state's size within the context of the presidential nomination process. See the explanation in the discussion of the previous model for more.

34 As Gurian and Haynes note: "[This] figure...represents the magnitude of coverage across states in each newspaper. Giving equal value to the *Post* and the *Times*, these figures were aggregated. To avoid local bias, values were assigned to New York, New Jersey and Connecticut based solely on coverage in the *Post*, and to Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia based solely on the coverage in the *Times* (see Aldrich 1980). ...to make these data more consistent across campaigns, each state was expressed as a percentage of the total coverage devoted to that campaign."

1980 primary season are derived from Robinson and Sheehan's (1983) data concerning the relative number of UPI wire service column inches devoted to each state. The number of inches in each state was divided by the total number of inches nationally to get the percentage of total national news coverage in each state for 1980.

There are problems associated with the use of different data sources, but they are offset by the fact that national newspapers are being used in all these cases. While this is helpful to some degree, the different operationalizations the authors develop give rise to some concerns about the comparability. Graber (1984) and Patterson (1980) established that campaign coverage is uniform across types of media and over time. This, coupled with the fact that the media data are somewhat standardized through the transformation into percentages of total national coverage, minimizes the concerns expressed above.

Among the other independent variables hypothesized to have an effect on the frontloading decision are the structural factors that serve the purpose of either motivating or preventing a frontloading decision from occurring. The date on which a state's primary was held in the previous election is one such structural consideration. Here, that concept is defined as the week in which the primary occurred. First, the number of weeks in the previous election's nomination season was determined. Each state's primary was then assigned a number depending upon when in the season it occurred. Those states with primaries at the end of the process were assigned low values and as the state's primaries get progressively earlier, they receive increasingly higher values.³⁵ Montana, for example, a state whose primary has traditionally been held during the last week of the season (the first week in June) consistently receives a value of one, while the Super Tuesday states of 1988 (primaries held on the second week in March),

³⁵ These values were assigned in reverse order in order to show a positive relationship between this variable and dependent variable.

have a value of fourteen, thirteen weeks earlier in the process.

Other structural factors that directly influence the cost/benefit analyses of state legislatures/state governments are whether the states' presidential primaries and primaries for state and local offices are held simultaneously and whether a state is moving away from being the only delegate selection event on a particular date. In this analysis the former will be operationalized as a binary variable, coded one for split primaries and zero for those states that hold all their primaries at once. The expectation is that those states with those two sets of primaries separated will be better able to shift the date on which their primary is scheduled. The latter is also a dummy variable coded similarly. Those states that moved their delegate selection events up on the calendar from one election cycle to the next and, in the process, moved away from being the only delegate selection event on a particular date are assigned a value of one. On the other hand, those states that already shared their primary date with other states or moved away from a crowded date in one election cycle to another crowded date in the next are assigned a value of zero.

Outside of those structural factors, another handful are hypothesized to be potentially important influences on the frontloading decision. First of all, the decision maker charged with changing the date on which the primary is scheduled or maintaining the status quo is a possible determinative factor. Individuals in states who hold the power over this decision would face far less resistance to a frontloading decision than those states where the traditional state governmental route to frontloading is intact. In other words, there are more opportunities for snags in the process in the latter route than in the former. This concept, too, will be measured as binary; states with individual frontloading decision makers are coded one and those states that utilize the state governmental path to frontloading are coded zero.

Secondly, there are a trio of additional dichotomous factors that should be accounted for as well. If the window of time in which primaries can be held is widened to include earlier months, then frontloading is more likely to occur. Years in which the parties allowed for earlier contests are coded one and all other years are coded zero. Similarly, if, by national party rules, a state's contest is already scheduled as early as it can be without violating said rules, then frontloading – by that state – very unlikely.³⁶ States scheduled on the beginning week of the window, then, are coded one while all other states are coded zero. Finally, states that have already moved could be hypothesized to be more likely to move again. Those states, then, that moved in the previous cycle are coded one and those that held their position or moved back are coded zero. This variable has the effect of serving as a lag of previous movement.

While those structural elements can either prevent frontloading or set conditions that are more favorable to it, there are political factors that could stand in the way of a frontloading bill making its way successfully through not only the state legislature but across the governor's desk as well. An additional series of dummy variables will be used here to account for the effects of a divided state legislature, divided governments, whether a state has a unified party (out of the White House) in control of its state government and whether there is an incumbent president running for reelection. The presence of any those conditions in a state in a given election year is coded one whereas their absence denotes a code of zero. It is expected that the two divided government variables and the incumbency variable will have negative impacts on the decision to frontload and that the presence of a unified out party in a state government will entice a frontloading move.

³⁶ Again, Florida and Michigan in 2008 are the best examples of states violating these rules. That example, however, is more of an exception than a rule.

The final grouping of factors that is hypothesized to have an effect on the frontloading decision is cultural in nature. State political culture has been shown to be an influence over how early state decision makers schedule the delegate selection events in their states (Carman and Barker 2005). The basis of that measure is Elazar's (1966) trichotomous variable placing states in individualistic, moralistic, or traditionalistic categories. Other measures have been shown to better capture political culture based on the prevailing partisan and/or ideological positions (based on state-level public opinion) within the state (Erikson, Wright and McIver 1987, 1993; Berry, et al. 2007). The cultural factors accounted for in this analysis will adopt the Berry, et al. measure to account for state political culture. The two indices capture the impact of both state citizen ideology and state government ideology.³⁷ The citizen ideology measure is one that ranges from 0 (conservative) to 100 (liberal) and is constructed using public opinion polls conducted in the state. It is used to account for ideology in the states generally, but also helps close the gap for states where the state government is not the frontloading decision maker. The government ideology measure utilizes the same range, but is developed based on partisanship in the legislature, votes cast and the ideology of the governor as well. This measure is useful in determining the ideology among the state governmental decision makers who are charged with making the frontloading decision in primary states. States where individuals and not state governments hold the authority to move the date on which a state's primary is scheduled are coded 0 or 100 based on the party affiliation of the official with that power. Again, since the Democratic Party has only had one cycle (1996) during the 1976-2008 period where they did not have an active nomination, the expectation is that states on the more liberal end of the spectrum will be more likely to shift the date on which their contests are held.

37 Though these concepts are related, they are distinct enough – not as highly correlated – to raise the specter of multicollinearity.

Finally, does a neighbor (or neighbors) move(s) have an impact on a state's frontloading decision? To measure that concept, data on the movement of each primary state's neighbors was collected and totaled. For the purposes of this analysis, a neighbor is defined as a state that shares a border with another. The percentage of total neighbor moves was then calculated and used. By using a percentage, the varying number of neighbors per state is standardized. If the raw totals were used, a state like Tennessee with eight neighbors would have a greater impetus to move than a state with fewer neighbors. While it could be argued that the raw data may be an appropriate measure that biases the measure in favor of those states with more neighbors. It may be sufficient, for example, for Maine to want to move if New Hampshire – the Pine Tree State's lone neighbor – moves. In that case, 100% of Maine's neighbors have moved in that scenario. The rationale behind the use of the percentage here is similar to that used in the cases of both the candidate spending and media coverage variables above.

Findings

Again, given that the dependent variable in this analysis of ability—whether a state's primary has moved to an earlier date—is binary, and that the attempt is to explain why the state legislatures in the states included in the sample decided in the way they did concerning primary movement during this period, the appropriate model is a time series cross-sectional logit analysis. As was mentioned previously, this will be done in two parts based on the differences in the measures for attention paid to the states over time. The data available for candidate spending and media attention overlaps fully over the period covering the 1976-1996 presidential election cycles. The bridged version of that attention concept – bringing together available candidate spending data and data on candidate ad buys in and visits to states to predict spending in cycles where the data was not available – will be used in the full model for entire 1976-2008 period.

The results in Table 4.2 paint a picture of deterrence to the frontloading decision. While actors within states were willing to propose a frontloading bill in the 2000-2008 period based on the incentives in place, those same incentives do not appear to have as large an impact on the decision to frontload when the structural, political and cultural elements are included. In fact, during the 1976-1996 span, a state's ability to move was significantly inhibited by whether it held its presidential primary concurrently with its primaries for state and local offices. States where that bond had either never existed or had been severed over time were almost five and a half times more likely to have shifted their primaries to earlier dates during that twenty year period. When a primary was scheduled in the previous cycle also proved consequential. For each week later in the process a state scheduled its primary in the previous cycle, it was 1.23 times more likely to frontload in the next cycle. Substantively, that is a hugely significant variable for those contests at the back end of the calendar. Finally, incumbency played a role as well. When both parties' nominations were at stake during the 1976-1996 period, states were more than four times as likely to move their primaries to earlier dates than in years in which an incumbent president was seeking reelection.

While the impact of surrounding states moving approached significance, the relationship ran contrary to the hypothesis posed. That would translate to those states with a smaller percentage of neighboring states frontloading their delegate selection contests being more likely to shift their primary to an earlier date. In other words, there was quite the opposite of a bandwagon effect at work during this period in terms of states being influenced to move by the moves of those around them. States, it would seem, were motivated more to carve out a niche for themselves on earlier dates than following the lead of their neighbors.

Table 4.2: Impact of Incentives and Deterrents on State Ability to Frontload (1976-1996)

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
Previous Position	-0.1795 ***		0.0691	0.8356
Week of contest position in previous cycle				
Decision Maker	0.2949		0.8756	1.3429
0=state government, 1=state party, 2=individual				
Split Primaries	1.9847 ***		0.6061	7.2770
0=concurrent primaries, 1=separate primaries				
Previous Move (lag)	-0.2432		0.6833	0.7841
0=no move, 1=move in previous cycle				
Window	0.8911		0.5847	2.4377
0=no expansion, 1=window expanded to earlier dates				
Earliest Date	-1.0775		1.2144	0.3405
0=can move, 1=scheduled as early as possible				
Presidential Incumbency	-1.4955 ***		0.5528	0.2241
0=open seat, 1=incumbent running				
Unified Out Party	-0.3768		0.6023	0.6861
0=division, 1=party out of White House controls state govt.				
Exec./Leg. Division	-0.7401		0.6163	0.4771
0=no division, 1=executive/legislative branch division				
Legislative Division	-0.1157		0.6149	0.8908
0=no division, 1=State House/Senate division				
% Delegates	0.2299		0.1650	1.2585
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Candidate Spending	-0.2829		0.1456	0.7536
Percentage of Cand. Spending received in previous cycle.				
% Media Attention	0.1577		0.1142	1.1708
Percentage of Media Attention received in previous cycle.				
Government Ideology	-0.0160		0.0116	0.9841
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Citizen Ideology	0.0385 **		0.0191	1.0393
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Neighbor Movement	-1.2111		0.9596	0.2979
Percentage of bordering states that moved in previous cycle				
		N = 174	X ² = 28.43	P = 0.0281
* < .10	** < .05	*** < .01		

The 1976-1996 model provides a baseline, but in what ways were the same set of factors felt across the entire 1976-2008 period? Again, the model is the exact same as the one above, but instead of using both the candidate spending and media coverage variables, a bridged version using candidate visits to and advertising buys in each state to predict spending data for the most recent cycles was utilized as a measure of attention to a state. The results in Table 4.3 to a

pooled time series logit model tell a similar tale to the results from the model covering the first twenty years of the total time span covered. Over the course of the total 32 years included in the study, the structural factors detailed above seem to have a decided impact on states' decisions to frontload their presidential primaries, but so too do several of the political factors.

From a structural standpoint, both the decision maker and the presence of split primaries influence the decision-making calculus behind frontloading. Primary states that avoid the trap of having to filter the frontloading decision through both the state legislature and the executive branch were over four times as likely to move their primaries forward. Similarly, states where the legislature did not have to make the decision on frontloading and whether to separate their presidential primary and the primaries for state and local offices were three and a half times as likely to frontload as their counterparts in states with two separate primaries already established.

Both of those structural factors draw a clear line between states that separate them based on their ability to make a move. Clearly, those states that have to push the frontloading decision through the state governmental path have a much more difficult time moving as do those that hold concurrent primaries. One additional note to make regarding the structural impediments is that not only has the impact of the previous cycles scheduling weakened, but the significance of the national party rules preventing movement has grown. These decisions to frontload are not being made in a vacuum. With movement occurring from cycle to cycle, in fact, there is a dynamic at work here in terms of these two variables in particular. Obviously, as more states move to the front (and constitute a majority of states), when a primary was scheduled in the previous cycle – especially if it was not late as was potentially the case in the past – becomes a less significant indicator of the decision to move the primary forward. Similarly, as more states over time schedule their primaries as early as they can be within the national party rules

governing delegate selection, they obviously become less able to move to earlier dates. Indeed, states that were not already scheduled on the earliest date allowed were almost 14 times as likely to shift the dates on which their primaries were scheduled than states already at that point. And that is logical given that there were so few rogue states – Florida and Michigan – over the entire period.

As was the case with the model covering the earlier period of the post-reform era, the full model found presidential incumbency to be a significant factor. Unlike that model, however, divided government (inter-branch) proved to be statistically significant among the other political factors. Election years with a presidential incumbent on the ballot seeking reelection were three times less likely to witness states shifting their primaries to earlier dates. To a similar degree, states with the legislative and executive branches divided among the parties were less likely to frontload by a factor of three. In both cases the results mirror expectations. Open seat elections were expected to trigger increased frontloading while divided government was hypothesized to have had a prohibitive effect on the frontloading decision-making process. Surprisingly, the presence of a unified out party in control of the state government did not end up being associated with the frontloading decision nor did partisan division among the chambers of the legislative branch. In the case of the latter, tests for multicollinearity were run between both types of divided government to determine if the level of association among the two was high enough as to bias the results. With a correlation of just over .5, that was not the case.

Finally, among the economic and cultural elements, the percentage share of total national delegates each state held and citizen ideology were found to be significant factors in the frontloading decision. Neither was a significant influence in the previous model, yet became significant with the addition of the three most recent presidential election cycles. The change in

the delegates result between models can be probably be explained by a couple of factors. First, most of the most delegate-rich states, California, Florida, New York and Texas among them, have shifted their primaries to earlier dates at least once since the 2000 cycle. Also, the group of states now left at the end of the process are all small-to-medium in terms of their delegation size. In other words, the largest states were much more likely to move in the time following the 1996 election cycle.

Table 4.3: Impact of Incentives and Deterrents on State Ability to Frontload (1976-2008)

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
Previous Position	-0.0823	**	0.0362	0.9201
Week of contest position in previous cycle				
Decision Maker	1.4090	***	1.8194	4.0919
0=state government, 1=state party, 2=individual				
Split Primaries	1.6176	***	2.0572	5.0411
0=concurrent primaries, 1=separate primaries				
Previous Move (lag)	0.1186		0.4557	1.1219
0=no move, 1=move in previous cycle				
Window	0.3374		0.6492	1.4012
0=no expansion, 1=window expanded to earlier dates				
Earliest Date	-2.7740	***	0.0519	0.0624
0=can move, 1=scheduled as early as possible				
Presidential Incumbency	-1.1672	***	0.1339	0.3112
0=open seat, 1=incumbent running				
Unified Out Party	0.1295		0.4530	1.1383
0=division, 1=party out of White House controls state govt.				
Exec./Leg. Division	-0.8457	**	0.1775	0.4292
0=no division, 1=executive/legislative branch division				
Legislative Division	0.2062		0.5250	1.2290
0=no division, 1=State House/Senate division				
% Delegates	0.2793	***	0.1252	1.3222
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Attention	-0.0865		0.0541	0.9171
Percentage of national attention received in previous cycle.				
Government Ideology	-0.0131		0.0069	0.9869
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Citizen Ideology	0.0316	**	0.0126	1.0321
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Neighbor Movement	-0.1064		0.5536	0.8991
Percentage of bordering states that moved in previous cycle				
	N = 311		X ² = 44.24	P = 0.0001
* < .10	** < .05	*** < .01		

The change in the citizen ideology result is more puzzling. Again, the hypothesis behind that variable was that because the Democratic Party had had more contested nominations over the full time span, liberal states were much more likely to shift the dates on which their primaries were held. That held across the full time period of the study, but did not during the first few election cycles. The Democrats did have contested nomination races in all three of the most recent cycles, but the Republicans also had competitive primary battles in two of the three elections after the turn of the century. This could potentially be explained by the fact that the Democrats opened their window to include February contests ahead of the 2004 cycle and were the more highly motivated party entering the 2008 cycle. In other words, more liberal states would have been more motivated to move during those two cycles than the more conservative states.

In the end, both models tell a story of conditions having to be right for frontloading to occur. The willingness to move may be there, but are states able to pull the shift off? States operating in an environment free of divided government in years with no incumbent president seeking renomination are much better equipped to move their primaries to earlier dates. Oppositely, states that have moved to the earliest possible date or have concurrent primaries are less able to shift the dates of their primaries. If conditions are right then, those states that are able typically move up; the costs are lower. However, if a state is stuck in an environment where a move is made more difficult, the costs prove preventative. That said, these findings only apply to primaries funded by the state – where the decision-making authority typically lies in the hand of the state government. Do these same trends hold when caucuses and party-run primaries, and thus a different set of decision makers, are added into the equation? The following chapter will examine that question.

Chapter 5. A Full Model of Frontloading Decision Making

The frontloading of presidential nominating contests took on a decidedly chaotic tone for the 2008 cycle. Whereas in the past several presidential election years a handful of states repositioned their delegate selection events, 2008 was marked by a free-for-all movement to dates on or around the February 5 date both national parties mandated as the earliest date on which such contests could be held. The result was what has been dubbed “Super Duper Tuesday,” or alternately, “the closest thing we've had to a national primary.” With more than twenty states weighing in on who the nominees for both parties would be in the November general election, February 5, 2008 became both the busiest and earliest primary/caucus date in the post-reform era.

What has motivated states to move forward though? And perhaps more importantly, what has kept some states from moving at all? The previous chapter shed some light on the conditions that both promote and deter primary states to opt to frontload those contests in order to have an impact on one or both of the parties' nominations. Mayer and Busch (2004) have, for example, shown that media coverage of the various early states' contests and candidate spending there as well, are significant factors in motivating the actors responsible for positioning those contests to consider repositioning them. In other words, these state actors are enticed by the attention that being early affords them. To some degree that addresses the first question, but the second—why others states stay put—remains largely unaddressed. Again, the previous chapter touched on this within the context of primary states. The willingness to move was present – actors on the state level were motivated to propose legislation to move the dates on which their primaries were held based on the incentives available – but the ability to move differed from state to state.

For instance, political culture within each state (Carman and Barker 2005) explains some

of the variation in the states' decisions to move or not move as does whether a state holds its presidential primary simultaneously with its primaries for state and local offices (Putnam 2007). The idea though, is one that remains understudied without the inclusion of caucuses and party-run primaries. However, what are the differences between states—and even within states over time—that cause some states to frontload their presidential primaries and caucuses while others remain in their traditional positions? Do the same trends found among primary states in the previous chapter hold true when caucuses are included in the model?

The goal of this chapter is to layer in caucuses and other contests in which the decision-making authority rests with state parties in an effort to augment the understanding of why some states move and others do not. In particular, two fundamental questions will be addressed: What are the differences across states in terms of the ability to reposition a delegate selection event based on the type of event—primary or caucus—used? Which format is chosen is typically affected by who the decision maker(s) is/are. Caucuses tend to be within the domain of state parties. The dates on which those events fall, then, are entirely up to those decision-making bodies. On the other hand, the dates on which presidential primaries are held is a decision made by a wider range of individuals. More often than not, these decisions find their origin within state legislatures and must then be signed by the state's executive. However, some primary dates are settled upon by state parties while others are moved under the sole authority of either the state's governor or secretary of state. The question that arises from this is whether the difference in actors—those in charge of setting the date on which a state's delegate selection event is held—has an effect on that state's ability to reposition said delegate selection event.

The focus in this chapter will on ability to frontload as opposed to both willingness and ability. There is no equivalent measure of willingness – state legislative proposals – in states in

which the frontloading decision is made by state parties. In the absence of such a mechanism, there is no way to determine how willing frontloading decision makers are in caucus or party-run primary states. However, without some of the fetters that bind state governments in their attempts to shift the dates on which their presidential primaries are held, caucus states are at least freer to make changes to the dates on which the first steps of the process are conducted. That, however, does not translate into a great level of willingness. As such, the focus in the analysis here will be on a state's – whether a caucus or primary state – ability to follow through on frontloading its delegate selection event.

The Rules of the Game

The presence of frontloading is but one of the many consequences of the reforms undertaken in the McGovern-Fraser round of reforms within the Democratic Party in the late 1960s. The intention was to remove the party's presidential nominating process from the proverbial smoke-filled rooms of national conventions, instead attaching the decision to the results of a series of delegate selection events within the states. The decision of who that party's nominee would be then was shifted away from the party elites and toward the rank-and-file party members. As this new system progressed through the two transitional presidential nominating cycles of the 1970s, several things happened. First there was a proliferation of primaries, as that became the preferred method for allocating national convention delegates within a majority of states. Beyond that, the actors—state legislatures, state parties, governors and secretaries of state—within states began to better understand the new system; a system in which the national parties set the rules under which delegates would be selected and thus who would ultimately become the presidential nominee.

Under those rules the actors within states could, as has already been discussed, choose which format in which the state would allocate delegates. Additionally though, those same actors could construct the rules by which these nominating events were conducted. Since the 2008 cycle has been so closely competitive on the Democratic side, many of these differences have been brought into sharper contrast. Again, the type of contest matters. Caucuses padded the pledged delegate count of Barack Obama while states with primaries tended to have more competitive races. In past cycles this distinction between contests mattered less simply because most of the attention was paid to primaries (Gurian 1993). The fact remains though, that the type of contest mattered then and matters now, but for different reasons.

Another, related factor that is consequential to delegate selection is the method of delegate allocation. Format is one thing, but the rules for actually distributing the delegates at stake in a contest are another. In other words, is the system for allocation winner-take-all, proportional or some combination of the two (Cavala 1974)? Again, the 2008 example is illustrative. John McCain was able to put himself in the driver's seat to the Republican nomination on Super Tuesday because his campaign had done so well in the big, winner-take-all contests. While McCain was able to build a big delegate lead, Hillary Clinton and Barack Obama were prevented from doing likewise because their contests were so close and the delegates awarded based on those contests were allocated proportionally. Tinkering with this rule applies more on the Republican side because the National Republican Committee leaves it up to the states to decide upon which method to use. The Democratic National Committee—through its Rules and Bylaws Committee—mandates that all states distribute delegates proportionally, based on the outcome of the primary or caucus. The implication is that the quickness with which a nomination is decided can be affected depending upon what rules of delegate allocation are chosen.

Who can participate matters also. Are primaries and caucuses open to independents or are registered party members the only ones included? This rule has implications for the type of candidate chosen by the party. Delegate selection events typically pull those vying for the nomination to the extremes of their party to win votes. As a result of that and whether the contest is open, a dichotomy develops based on candidate type: establishment candidates versus those candidates representing an alternative to the establishment (Steger 2000). In 2008, Hillary Clinton has been that establishment candidate in the same way that Walter Mondale was for the Democrats in 1984 or George H.W. Bush and Bob Dole were for the Republicans in 1988 and 1996, respectively. Barack Obama falls in the latter category, similar to Gary Hart in 1984 for the Democrats or John McCain for the Republicans in 2000. Those in the latter category are the candidates who are hypothesized to require some assistance from the contests that open the process up to independents.

Finally, the calendar position of a delegate selection event is within the purview of the decision making entities within each state. The boundaries—both beginning and end—are set by the national parties, but those that make the decisions on the positioning of the delegate selection event in a state have free reign to place the state's contest anywhere within that window. In the post-reform era, that has meant a trend toward the front of the calendar. Since 1988, when the states of the former confederacy and others moved to the second Tuesday in March, the pace of the frontloading of presidential nominating contests has only quickened. Mayer and Busch (2004) have tracked this as the cumulative percentage of delegates allocated week by week during the primary seasons since 1952. The tipping point then becomes the point at which fifty percent (plus one) delegates have been awarded; the earliest point at which a

nomination can be settled (Norrander 2000). As more states have moved up, that point has crept ever closer to the beginning of the process.

The questions that arise from this, then, are which states are decisive and how quickly was the nomination determined? The latter has implications for who and what type of candidate is nominated. Front runners have been advantaged by the compressed calendar created by frontloading; having the money and resources necessary to compete in so many places so early (Gurian 1986, Mayer and Busch 2004). It is the former question though that has bearing on this research. States are motivated to be on the “right” side of that decisive/not decisive breaking point; to have at least some influence over the outcome of the nomination races and to potentially gain the attention of the candidates and the media before the nomination is settled and the focus shifts toward relevant battleground states in the general election. The catch there is that some states are more able to move than others.

The Frontloading of Presidential Nominating Contests

Ultimately, one thing is clear: rules matter in the nomination game (Aldrich 1980, Geer 1986, Norrander 1996). The rules that developed out of the McGovern-Fraser reforms affect the course of the campaigns that are conducted within their framework. Little though, is fully understood about the efforts within the states to operate under those rules; especially the decisions to frontload delegate selection events. Those decisions make a difference in how the campaigns play out and who gains nomination in each of the parties.

What emerges is a twofold picture of what is at stake for state actors when making the frontloading decision. On the one hand, the movement of delegate selection events to ever earlier dates from nomination cycle to nomination cycle is motivated by a series of perceived perquisites. However, motivated as these actors may be, they are confronted with varying degrees of resistance

(from state to state) to actually moving the contest. In answer to the first part of that decision making process, Mayer and Busch (2004) set the stage by laying out the motivating factors influencing that process. Initially, they demonstrate that the date on which a delegate selection event is held affects both the amount of candidate spending in that state and media coverage of the contest. The earlier a state holds a contest, the greater both spending and coverage are. By extension, states are motivated to move up to get a piece of that pie.

Mayer and Busch use anecdotal evidence to note that states are motivated to move by other factors as well. The frontloading decision makers from state to state may be motivated to give the voters of their states a say in which candidate is chosen as each party's nominee. To ensure that, a state has to position its primary or caucus on a date early enough for it to be consequential to the nomination. The earliest point a nomination can be decided is the point at which fifty percent of the delegates at stake (plus one) have been allocated. Positioning a contest ahead of that point then becomes essential to any state attempting to be among the faction of states decisive to the nominations. Given that this point is a moving target because of other states moving as well, the default position to move to in recent cycles has become the earliest point on which the national parties allow for a delegate selection contest to be held. Typically, that is the week that is typically the one dubbed Super Tuesday for that cycle.

Another consideration that Mayer and Busch highlight is policy-related; the policy concessions a winning presidential candidate can bestow on a state for early support in a nominating contest. For example, Barack Obama might give the state of Iowa policy concessions once in office as opposed to another similar state that gave Hillary Clinton the nod in its primary or caucus. Taylor (n.d.) has found some evidence of this among the earliest of states on the presidential primary calendar. The path to this benefit is more difficult to divine

simply because it is reliant on victory. First, a candidate not only has to win the nomination but the presidency as well. Otherwise the scenario involves a sitting president being challenged in the primaries, which may not, in turn, bode well for ultimately getting those benefits.

The literature then, provides a solid picture of what is motivating states to move. What is not as clearly understood though is why some states move their nominating contests and others choose not to. This requires a shift in focus from candidate and media attention within each state to an examination of the contextual factors that differ across states. Carman and Barker (2005) began this shift in focus by exploring the impact political culture within a state has on the decision to move that state's nominating contest. Using Elazar's (1966) trichotomous measure of political culture—dividing states into traditionalistic, moralistic or individualistic—they find that the more moralistic states are the ones apt to move their delegate selection events. In other words, those states where the government is traditionally viewed as a positive force are the ones most likely to reposition their nominating contests (as compared to states that view limited government as the goal as typified by the individualistic approach). On its face that hypothesis jibes well with the idea that government is the vehicle of change and that altering the date on which delegates are selected by the state is a means of achieving that.

Falling back on the Elazar measure paints the actions within states with a broad stroke though. The nuances of state activity are lost in the process. While states can maneuver within the rules established since the McGovern-Fraser reforms, all states are not created equal in their ability to tinker with these rules, especially in regards to the repositioning of delegate selection events. Those are the specifics that are lost with Carman and Barker's use of the Elazar measure.

One variation – among several structural factors that influence the frontloading decision – across those states holding primaries is whether the presidential primaries are held

simultaneously with the primaries for state and local offices. If those two sets of primaries are bound by law then it becomes more difficult for a state to move. Either both sets of primaries need to be repositioned or an entirely new election (presidential primary) needs to be conducted. Both come at a cost. The latter is easier to understand: a new election equals a new expenditure. In addition, two laws would have to be changed, not one; the law on timing and the law binding the primaries. That opens the door to the potential disagreement—whether inter-chamber or intra-chamber—within a legislature that could prevent either or both measures from being changed.

The former, on the other hand, requires further explanation. The costs of moving both sets of primaries becomes less a question of changing laws and more a matter of the ambition and motivation of the legislators themselves. If those two sets of primaries are held simultaneously, that implies that state legislators are involved in primary elections of their own. The question then shifts from one of what the state's role in the presidential nomination is to one of how the date change affects each legislator. Atkeson and Maestas (2004) have found a significant difference in levels of turnout based on whether a state holds its primary before the point at which the nomination has been decided. Is the higher turnout that is associated with an earlier contest good or bad for state legislators and would it affect down ballot races like the ones in which state legislators are involved? Those are additional considerations factored into the frontloading decision making calculus of each member of a state legislature.

Upward ambition of state legislators also works its way into the decision making calculus when moving the two sets of primaries together. In Texas, for example, office holders are required to vacate their current positions to run for a higher office if the filing deadline for the election is in the calendar year prior to the general election. That type of scenario would mean a couple of things: 1) if the primaries were moved early enough it would trigger an even earlier filing

deadline, which would mean 2) a state legislator aiming to move up to a congressional seat, for instance, would not have a state legislative seat to return to if the congressional bid is unsuccessful. It is exactly these sorts of state-level nuances that can stand in the way of a state legislature moving its presidential primary to an earlier date within the nominating calendar.

While those examples carry with them a certain level of specificity, they do underscore the importance of this idea of split primaries. From 1976-2008, those states that already had severed the link—or for that matter never had a link to begin with—between presidential primaries and primaries for state and local offices were greater than four times more likely to move their contests to earlier dates than those where the binds were still on the books . These types of factors may collectively fit under the rubric of political culture, but but here is treated as a structural factor. The idea then that those states which have pre-existent setups where the bond between presidential primaries and those for state and local offices has been severed, are advantaged over those where the events are held together is important. That then indicates that there is something to the notion that state-level factors influence a state's ability to move their delegate selection events on the nominating calendar.

Caucuses and the Differences in Frontloading Decision Makers

This question then is ultimately best couched in terms of the obstacles that stand in the way of a state moving its delegate selection event to an earlier date. Political culture matters. The presence of split primaries matters as do several other elements discussed within the context of primary states in the previous chapter. However, other factors that affect a wide swath of states on this issue come to the fore as well, but have yet to receive the necessary attention within the literature. The goal of this chapter is to examine contest type within the context of frontloading; to begin to pull caucuses into the understanding of the frontloading process. The subsequent goal

is to, by extension, analyze the effect that different decision makers—they largely differ across contest types—have on a state's ability to move their delegate selection event to an earlier date.

Inherent in this discussion is the question concerning whether caucuses are more or less likely to move to earlier dates than primaries. Caucuses are functions of the state party apparatus. Whereas the bulk of decisions to move primaries are made based on the interactions within state legislatures and then between the legislature and the governor, caucus positioning on the nomination calendar is a decision at the discretion of the state party. Since the intra-chamber and inter-chamber relationships in a legislature and the legislature's relationship with the governor are rife with the potential for partisan division, primaries, it is hypothesized here, encounter more difficulty on the road to being moved. Caucuses, on the other hand, offer a scenario where that type of partisanship is absent; making for an easier repositioning on the nominating calendar. The Kansas example from the lead up to the 2008 cycle is instructive here. Unable to establish—or re-establish—a presidential primary and move it to an earlier date (February 2, 2008), the Kansas legislature yielded to the state parties to determine the date on and method by which delegates would be selected. Unlike the legislature, neither Kansas party found much difficulty in placing their caucuses on February 5 (Democrats) and February 9 (Republicans).

Based on who or what body in each state is making the frontloading decision, then, the ease with which a state can move varies. This hypothesis entails something of a hierarchy of decision makers. State legislatures and governors are vulnerable to partisan division. That type of division is lacking in the caucuses which have their dates solidified by individual state parties. Simply because inter-party division is absent however, does not translate into a delegate selection event date decision that is devoid of division. Intra-party rancor could stand in the way of a state party moving its caucus to an earlier position on the nominating calendar as well.

These types of obstacles are more easily overcome when the decision making process is simplified; when it is in the hands of one individual. Several states leave it up to either the secretary of state or the governor to make the decision to move a primary or caucus to a more advantageous date. This has been the case in New Hampshire since 1976, when the state legislature ceded the decision making power on this issue to the secretary of state. The Granite state has been insulated as a result from attacks on its “first in the nation” status by other opportunistic states seeking influence in the nomination battle(s). Three categories then emerge from this hierarchy: legislatures/governors potentially divided by partisanship, state parties susceptible to internal division and individuals free of the fetters of either type of division.

Data and Methods

In order to fully examine these competing hypotheses – decision makers or contest type – a two-pronged approach will be taken. Since the goal is to look at the effects of contest type and decision making apparatus on a state's ability to move its delegate selection event to an earlier date, the same dependent variable used in Putnam (2007) will be used; the binary choice between moving a delegate selection event to an earlier and either moving back or staying put. As was the case in that research and in the model in the previous chapter, a times series cross-sectional logistic regression model will be constructed to test the impact of these two variables and the other controls utilized earlier on the decision to frontloading across the full sample of states from 1976-2008. To take advantage of both the candidate spending and media coverage data, additional models will be run to those data in the years both were available (1976-1996).

Dependent and New Independent Variables

The first approach then, will examine the effect that holding either a caucus or primary has on a state decision maker's decision to move the delegate selection event forward. This

concept is operationalized as a dichotomous variable coded one for primary states and zero for caucus and party-run primary states. To further differentiate between the two contest types, the second approach will factor in the differing frontloading decision makers across states. Is it more advantageous then to remove the fetters of partisanship, placing the event positioning decision in the hands of, not the state legislatures, but state parties or some individual acting alone instead? This model will parse out the differences in the “hierarchy of decision makers” outlined above.³⁸

Other Factors

State decisions to frontload delegate selection events are affected by other influences as well. As was described in the previous chapter, there are structural, political and cultural factors that can either encourage or effectively prevent states from moving to earlier dates. There are, however, economic factors that serve to entice states to go earlier as well. From a structural perspective, though, there are several factors involving the timing of a nominating contest. The previous position of a delegate selection event has a bearing on the likelihood that a contest would be moved in a subsequent cycle.³⁹ The later, then, that a contest was held in the immediately previous cycle, the greater the chances are that a state will move in the next cycle all else being equal. California, for instance, sat on the first or second Tuesday in June for every post-reform cycle until 1996. The Golden state's likelihood of moving was greater than that of a state like Georgia, which had moved up to the earliest date allowed by the national parties for the 1992 cycle.

38 This is an ordered categorical variable ranging from state legislature/governor (0) to state parties (1) to individuals (2). As the numbers associated with each category increase, the number of obstacles in the way of a frontloading decision are hypothesized to decrease.

39 When a delegate selection event was in the previous cycle is operationalized as the week it fell on in that previous cycle. The weeks are numbered from the latest dates to the earliest dates with the earliest dates being valued more. All delegate selection dates are from *Congressional Quarterly Weekly Report*.

Additionally, if a state has shown the propensity to move with a move in a previous cycle, the decision makers there would be apt to protect their newly acquired benefits.⁴⁰ This example is most clearly illustrated by New Hampshire and Iowa. Both states have shown the willingness to move if their traditional “first in the nation” status is threatened. It is hypothesized that that movement then is a function of the past movement. The willingness to ~~move in one cycle affects~~ the willingness to move in subsequent cycles. The movement of states during the 2008 cycle is indicative of this phenomenon as well. Many of the states that had moved to the first Tuesday in March date of Super Tuesdays past were among the more than twenty states that clustered on the February 5 date (the earliest possible date without incurring sanctions from the national parties) that served as Super Tuesday in 2008.

Finally, there are three additional structural elements to be accounted for. First, as has been alluded to above, states that are already scheduled on the dates that the parties deem the earliest possible are obviously prevented from moving further. This requires the addition of two variables: 1) is the state already at the earliest position allowed and 2) have the parties expanded the window in which contests can be held to include earlier dates? As was the case, in the previous chapters model, those states that are already as early as they can be are coded one and otherwise zero. Also, those election years that saw the parties open their windows are coded one while the remaining years are coded zero. The expectation is that the former will be prohibitive to the frontloading decision and the presence of the latter will promote it. One additional factor detailed above – that also proved highly significant in the primaries model – is the presences of split primaries. Those states that hold separate presidential primaries and primaries for state and local offices (coded one) are better able to shift the dates on which

⁴⁰ This also serves as a lag of the dependent variable for the time series portion of the model below. The variable is coded one for a move in the last cycle and zero otherwise.

their primaries (or caucuses) are held then those states with those two sets of primaries conducted concurrently.

There also exist political obstacles beyond those accounting for contest type or different decision makers that warrant consideration in the context of the frontloading of delegate selection events. Partisanship and incumbency also influence that decision. There are layers to how partisanship intervenes in the model. A state government can be divided by partisanship between chambers in a legislature or between a united legislature and a governor of the opposite party. Either type of division stands in the path of a state moving its, in this case, primary to an earlier date.⁴¹

Presidential incumbency also affects this positioning decision and can overlap with partisanship as well. On the surface, any decision maker(s) from a party other than the incumbent president's party is more likely to tinker with the rules to swing the electoral advantages in their party's direction (Klinkner 1994). The frontloading decision is in among those rules tinkering possibilities. Those states then which have the out party in unified control of a state government or have a state party or individual (also of the out party) charged with the task of setting the date of nominating contest are the states abler to move their events to earlier dates (similar to Meinke, et al. 2006). It was just this sort of situation that confronted the Democratic controlled state governments in the South in the lead up to the 1988 election (Hadley and Stanley 1989). Most of the states had unified Democratic support of a regional frontloading of events to affect the type of nominee chosen; one that would play well in the South during the general election. The operationalizations for these concepts used in the previous chapter are again used here.

41 This is one of the major reasons why it is hypothesized that caucuses and primaries controlled by either the state parties or individuals have an easier time moving than those primaries positioned by state legislatures and governors. As such, dichotomous variables are included to account for both inter-chamber division as well as legislative/executive division.

Given Carman and Barker's (2005) examination of political culture in relation to which states move their primaries to earlier dates, some measure of culture or region should be considered as well. While the measure had some explanatory value in an earlier study, much of that was explained away when a contextual factor like split primaries was included in a previous model examining the frontloading decision (Putnam 2008). Both census region and Elazar's political culture measure have been criticized for oversimplifying the concept of political culture, and as such, the Berry, et al. (2008) measures of state governmental and also citizen ideology are used here to account for the effects political culture on the frontloading decision. The resulting range (from 0 = conservative, to 100 = liberal) provides more differentiation between states than the categorical region or Elazar measures. A similar scenario as to the one where the effects of culture were explained away following the addition of these political and structural concepts could play out here as well. A contextual factor such as the difference in contest type or decision maker could mute the effects of culture or region on the decision to reposition a delegate selection event. A variable for the percentage of neighbor moves was also added.

Lastly, in keeping in line with the relationships Mayer and Busch (2004) described, measures of candidate spending and media attention head another cluster of factors that are considered. Assuming that these decision makers are acting rationally, the motivation is to maximize the amount of both received in any given cycle. Both measures offer retrospective looks and will be used in a model examining the 1976-1996 period where both sets of data are available. The rational decision maker(s) would look at how much media attention and/or candidate spending was received in the previous cycle and determine if a move to an earlier date would bolster the percentage of each compared to other states. In the full model for the entire

1976-2008 period the bridged version of the attention variable from the previous chapter will be utilized here as well to account for the impact of economic incentives on the frontloading decision.⁴² In a similar vein, state decision makers could temper their expectations of what would be received from a move to an earlier date based on their size. More delegate-rich states would have an advantage over states their delegate-poor brethren if a contest in each were held on the same day. Every Super Tuesday since 1988 has borne this out as candidates have opted to focus on the larger states at the expense of smaller, less delegate-rich states. Delegation size is measured as the percentage of the total national delegates – averaged across parties for primary states and as a percentage of the total party delegate total for caucus states.

Analysis

The theoretical argument here is that caucuses are more likely to be repositioned than primaries. Beyond that if the body or individual making that decision is not a state legislature, but instead a state party or an individual, that decision is easier as well. As such, all such decisions made in every state from 1976-1996 will be examined first with a full model to follow. Given the calendar in 1976, decisions were made that affected the calendar in 1980 and so on. While 1972 corresponds with the beginning of the McGovern-Fraser reform era, both that cycle and the 1976 cycle were both transitional. The 1980 presidential nomination cycle saw the first real efforts on the part of states to position themselves to have an effect on the nomination. The frontloading moves made for the 1980 cycle then are the beginning point of the analysis. Ultimately, that includes eight election cycles through 2008. The data set includes an observation for each competitive contest that was waged during those eight election cycles, yielding a state-year unit of analysis. There are a total of 492 observations across 74 groups of contests. Caucus states and state that have over the course of the period of this study transitioned from being a caucus state to

42 See Chapter 4 for a broader discussion of the operationalizations underlying these concepts.

being a primary state are split into Democratic and Republican groups to account for the differences in decision-makers. In caucus states, both the state parties are making decisions on when to schedule their contests. Since the dependent variable is binary and the question posed includes a time component, a time series cross-sectional logit model, again, will be employed to consider the variation across each quadrennial cycle.

Findings

To empirically examine the effects of contest type and type of decision makers on the frontloading decisions during this period, a two-layered approach is necessary.⁴³ In the first model, contest type is taken into account for the 1976-1996 period.

In this model, whether the state used a primary or a caucus as its mode of allocating convention delegates had no significant impact on the frontloading decisions made from 1976-1996. In fact, little proved statistically significant in this model. That mirrors to some extent the findings in the same period for the model constrained to primaries. Scheduling in the previous election cycle was an important indicator. States later by one week in the process were one and a quarter times as likely to move their delegate selection events to earlier dates. Again, applied across a several week differential, that ends up being substantively significant as well. The presence of an incumbent seeking reelection is also prohibitive to frontloading. Years in which incumbents were seeking uncontested renomination were over two and a half times less likely to witness frontloading moves than years when both parties had active nomination races. Finally, both the presence of split

43 The contest type and type of decision maker variables are highly correlated because of the overlap between the two concepts. Most primary dates are set by state legislatures/governors and most caucus dates are determined by state parties. Party run primaries like those in South Carolina fall in the state party category in the decision maker variable while the New Hampshire primary—set by the secretary of state—falls in the category devoted to individuals who make those decisions. So while the two variables are not perfectly correlated they are correlated at a .78 level; making multicollinearity a concern. Included in a model together, neither variable is statistically significant, though the contest variable is just shy of the .05 mark (results available upon request). The solution here then, is to construct two models to deal with the two concepts.

Table 5.1: Impacts on State Ability to Frontload (1976-1996)--Primaries vs. Caucuses

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
Previous Position	-0.1921 ***		0.0331	0.8252
Week of contest position in previous cycle				
Primary	-0.8452 **		0.1615	0.4295
0=caucus, 1=primary				
Split Primaries	1.2681 ***		1.4551	3.5540
0=concurrent primaries, 1=separate primaries				
Previous Move (lag)	-0.4088		0.2991	0.6644
0=no move, 1=move in previous cycle				
Window	0.9459 **		1.0598	2.5751
0=no expansion, 1=window expanded to earlier dates				
Earliest Date	-1.3403 **		0.1670	0.2618
0=can move, 1=scheduled as early as possible				
Presidential Incumbency	-1.1269 ***		0.1234	0.3240
0=open seat, 1=incumbent running				
Unified Out Party	0.3229		0.5314	1.3812
0=division, 1=party out of White House controls state govt.				
Exec./Leg. Division	-0.2115		0.3868	0.8094
0=no division, 1=executive/legislative branch division				
Legislative Division	-0.0463		0.5375	0.9548
0=no division, 1=State House/Senate division				
% Delegates	0.1130		0.1424	1.1197
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Candidate Spending	-0.1534		0.1057	0.8578
Percentage of Cand. Spending received in previous cycle.				
% Media Coverage	0.1235		0.0923	1.1314
Percentage of Media Attention received in previous cycle.				
Government				
Ideology	-0.0005		0.0086	0.9995
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Citizen Ideology	0.0029		0.0131	1.0029
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Neighbor Movement	-1.1665 *		0.2035	0.3115
Percentage of bordering states that moved in previous cycle				
	N = 294		X ² = 48.18	P = 0.0000
* < .10	** < .05	*** < .01		

primaries and the percentage of neighbors making frontloading moves approached statistical significance, but were puzzling all the same. The neighbors variable once again ran contrary to the direction of the hypothesis – that a higher percentage of neighbors frontloading would trigger a state to frontload as well – and the split primaries variable was less significant than originally thought.

Since the addition of caucuses entailed the addition of many observations with split contests – in this instance, presidential caucuses and primaries for state and local offices – the expectation was that this variable would continue to be among the largest driving forces behind the frontloading decision. However, the results for the 1976-1996 model paint a different picture.

Do these same trends hold true in a full model that encompasses the movement for all eight election cycles since 1976? Adding in all the movement from the last three cycles (2000-2008) had the effect of bringing several additional variables into significance in the previous chapter. Will the effect be similar in this model for all contests that accounts for the mode of delegate selection as well? The results in Table 5.2 tell a similar tale to the transition to the full model in the previous chapter. A handful of the structural variables serve as either motivating or deterring forces while incumbency and divided government continue to provide roadblocks to further frontloading.

Indeed, while a state's previous position approached statistical significance, the impact was not substantive. The true impact from layering in the three most recent election cycles is that the mode of delegate selection became a more determinative influence on the frontloading decision. Caucus states over the course of the 32 years covered were over two times more likely to shift the date on which their delegate selection events were held than their primary state counterparts. Among the other structural factors, states already scheduled as early as the parties would allow were by an extreme amount – over 31 times – less likely to move the dates on which their nominating contests were held. This is not surprising given that so many states had shifted to that point by turn of the century. Finally, of the political factors, years in which an incumbent was running uncontested for renomination were less likely to see frontloading decisions made by a factor of more than four. States with governments divided between the executive and legislative

branch were also twice as likely not to frontload as those states where that condition was absent.

Table 5.2: Impacts on State Ability to Frontload (1976-2008)--Primaries vs. Caucuses

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
Previous Position	-0.0825 ***		0.0244	0.9208
Week of contest position in previous cycle				
Primary	-1.0862 ***		0.0902	0.3375
0=caucus, 1=primary				
Split Primaries	0.9027 ***		0.7135	2.4663
0=concurrent primaries, 1=separate primaries				
Previous Move (lag)	-0.0082		0.2937	0.9918
0=no move, 1=move in previous cycle				
Window	0.8511 ***		0.7589	2.3423
0=no expansion, 1=window expanded to earlier dates				
Earliest Date	-2.7565 ***		0.0329	0.0635
0=can move, 1=scheduled as early as possible				
Presidential Incumbency	-1.4080 ***		0.0750	0.2446
0=open seat, 1=incumbent running				
Unified Out Party	0.2426		0.3548	1.2746
0=division, 1=party out of White House controls state govt.				
Exec./Leg. Division	-0.6269 *		0.1794	0.5343
0=no division, 1=executive/legislative branch division				
Legislative Division	0.1392		0.4467	1.1493
0=no division, 1=State House/Senate division				
% Delegates	0.1183		0.0863	1.1256
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Attention	0.0533		0.0421	1.0548
Percentage of national attention received in previous cycle.				
Government Ideology	0.0013		0.0054	1.0013
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Citizen Ideology	0.0021		0.0090	1.0021
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Neighbor Movement	-0.2216		0.3438	0.8013
Percentage of bordering states that moved in previous cycle				
N = 489		X ² = 71.63		P = 0.0000

* < .10

** < .05

*** < .01

What about the decision makers, though? When the contests are not categorized by selection mode, but by the underlying ease with which the decision-making body in the state can opt to frontload, are there any differences that can be gleaned? Again, the idea here is that as partisanship is stripped from the decision in the switch from a primary to a party-run primary or

caucus – when the decision maker is the state government and not the state party – the decision becomes less divisive. Additionally, individuals have an even easier path to making the frontloading decision than either a state party or state government because they have typically been given the sole authority over that decision as a means a making the state better able to move quickly (as in New Hampshire). Is this hierarchy of decision makers consequential to the frontloading decision, though? Again, the advantage of this measure is that it provides an additional line of gradation between types of states that the dichotomous primary/caucus measure could not capture. A time series cross-sectional logistic regression model examining the relationship between the frontloading decision and this hierarchy of decision makers over the 1976-1996 period was constructed the results of which can be found in Table 5.3.

The results here mirror those in the primary/caucus model for the same period above (see Table 5.1). In fact, the same list of variables is significant and additionally the decision-makers variable, like the dichotomous primary/caucus measure – was not significant over the 1976-1996 time span. Incumbency and when the state's contest was scheduled in the previous cycle were the driving forces behind the frontloading decision during those twenty years. Both factors performed in the expected direction.

One final model was run that examined the impact of the different decision makers over the full eight election cycles covered in the analysis. In this instance, the decision maker variable proved significant. A one unit change in the hierarchy – moving from the state government to the state party or from the state party to individuals making the frontloading decision – has the effect of altering the odds of a state frontloading by a factor of nearly three. Again, the additional structural factors of consequence include the variable denoting a state already being as early as it can be. Given the small number of states that have actually flaunted party rules on this matter over the

course of the post-reform era, this is not surprising. Also, when a primary or caucus was scheduled in the previous cycle was a significant indicator of the likelihood of frontloading. Yet, that was all in terms of the structural factors that had an impact.

Table 5.3: Impacts on State Ability to Frontload (1976-1996)—Hierarchy of Decision Makers

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
Previous Position	-0.1909	***	0.0333	0.8262
Week of contest position in previous cycle				
Decision Maker	0.6736	*	0.6807	1.9613
0=state government, 1=state party, 2=individual				
Split Primaries	1.3237	***	1.5370	3.7573
0=concurrent primaries, 1=separate primaries				
Previous Move (lag)	-0.4023		0.3001	0.6688
0=no move, 1=move in previous cycle				
Window	0.8557	**	0.9510	2.3530
0=no expansion, 1=window expanded to earlier dates				
Earliest Date	-1.2737	**	0.1781	0.2798
0=can move, 1=scheduled as early as possible				
Presidential Incumbency	-1.0711	***	0.1285	0.3426
0=open seat, 1=incumbent running				
Unified Out Party	0.3869		0.5617	1.4724
0=division, 1=party out of White House controls state govt.				
Exec./Leg. Division	-0.2244		0.3828	0.7990
0=no division, 1=executive/legislative branch division				
Legislative Division	-0.0189		0.5525	0.9812
0=no division, 1=State House/Senate division				
% Delegates	0.1505		0.1509	1.1624
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Candidate Spending	-0.1669		0.1059	0.8463
Percentage of Cand. Spending received in previous cycle.				
% Media Coverage	0.0811		0.0905	1.0845
Percentage of Media Attention received in previous cycle.				
Government Ideology	-0.0028		0.0084	0.9972
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Citizen Ideology	0.0072		0.0130	1.0072
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Neighbor Movement	-1.1620	*	0.2042	0.3129
Percentage of bordering states that moved in previous cycle				
	N = 294		X ² = 47.09	P = 0.0001

* < .10

** < .05

*** < .01

Among the political and economic factors, incumbency, divided government (inter-branch) and the percentage share of delegates each state had in the previous cycle were significant. Divided government, though only approached significance, attaining it at the .10 level. States in years when

Table 5.4: Impacts on State Ability to Frontload (1976-1996)—Hierarchy of Decision Makers

	β		Std. Error	Odds Ratio
Previous Position	-0.0871	***	0.0244	0.9166
Week of contest position in previous cycle				
Decision Maker	1.1846	***	0.8339	3.2693
0=state government, 1=state party, 2=individual				
Split Primaries	0.8704	***	0.6920	2.3878
0=concurrent primaries, 1=separate primaries				
Previous Move (lag)	-0.0013		0.2988	0.9987
0=no move, 1=move in previous cycle				
Window	0.7428	**	0.6735	2.1019
0=no expansion, 1=window expanded to earlier dates				
Earliest Date	-2.7409	***	0.0338	0.0645
0=can move, 1=scheduled as early as possible				
Presidential Incumbency	-1.3442	***	0.0790	0.2607
0=open seat, 1=incumbent running				
Unified Out Party	0.3346		0.3904	1.3974
0=division, 1=party out of White House controls state govt.				
Exec./Leg. Division	-0.4495	*	0.2196	0.6380
0=no division, 1=executive/legislative branch division				
Legislative Division	0.0656		0.4161	1.0678
0=no division, 1=State House/Senate division				
% Delegates	0.1751	**	0.0946	1.1913
Percentage of delegates state held in previous cycle.				
% Attention	-0.0039		0.0431	0.9961
Percentage of national attention received in previous cycle.				
Government Ideology	-0.0039		0.0053	0.9961
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Citizen Ideology	0.0101		0.0091	1.0102
Berry et al. Measure, 0=most conservative, 100=most liberal				
Neighbor Movement	-0.2399		0.3404	0.7867
Percentage of bordering states that moved in previous cycle				
	N = 489		X ² = 75.01	P = 0.0000
* < .10	** < .05	*** < .01		

both parties' nominations were at stake were almost four times as likely to frontload their delegate selection events as in other election cycles. A state's delegation size was also found to be

influential. A one percent increase in the share of delegates as state had to the national conventions affected a nearly one and a quarter time increase in the likelihood of frontloading. In other words, California was much more likely to move, all things held constant, than Wyoming.

The odd thing about the results here and in the other models above is that the structural factors that dogged state governments in their ability to shift the dates on which their primaries were scheduled are of nearly no consequence when caucuses and party-run primaries are factored in. Some of the political (incumbency and divided government) and economic (percentage share of delegates) factors remained influential across the models in both chapters, but it is the fading impact that the structural factors had in these models that was noteworthy. Much of this is largely attributable to the fact that these factors are simply not of consequence in states where the decision to move the state's contest is in the hands of state parties and not state governments. Still, that a 25% increase in the number of observations from the primary-specific model to this full model has had quite an impact on the overall picture. In the full model, those structural elements are of less import than the political factors that worked in tandem with factors such as split primaries in the models in the previous chapter.

Chapter 6. The Future of Frontloading and the Implications of the Current System

Implications

With the 2008 primary calendar essentially representing a *de facto* national primary, there is not much more frontloading that can take place in subsequent cycles without the parties opening up the process to include unsanctioned January contests. The states that are already positioned as early as is allowed by the two parties cannot move again without facing sanction like Florida and Michigan in 2008. And the states that bring up the rear have proven, if not content in their current positions, then unable to shift to earlier, more advantageous dates on the calendar whether because of concurrent presidential primaries and state and local primaries or some other factor or factors.

The same problems associated with frontloading still exist, though, and are seemingly irreconcilable for that latter group of states. Not only are voters in those states effectively disenfranchised by having an overly constrained choice set – if those voters have a choice other than the presumptive nominee at that late stage of the game – but, given the structural disadvantage those states are at in terms of their institutional ability to move in the first place, they are seemingly doomed to that fate under the current system. Barring a fundamental restructuring of the process, states like North Carolina, Indiana, Oregon and Pennsylvania will continue to face an uphill climb as far as the decision to frontload is concerned. That ends up being a huge bloc of voters that are continually on the outside looking in on the presidential nomination process. This, by extension, has implications for democratic theory: that voters in different states are treated differently based on the level of obstacles faced in any attempt to shift the date on which their delegate selection event is scheduled. This is true not only of states with concurrent primaries, but in those states that have primaries instead of caucuses. Structurally,

these states and the voters within them are at a disadvantage.

However, the mad dash to the beginning of February 2008 in the period leading up to that cycle coupled with the problems associated with the Florida and Michigan moves marked a tipping point in the frontloaded era; that things had gone far enough. As the 2010 midterms give way full scale to the 2012 presidential election cycle, both parties are in the midst of reexamining the rules by which their nominees are to be chosen in the next nomination cycle. The Democratic Party has, as of the end of 2009, sent recommendations to its rules-making body, Rules and Bylaws Committee, that will urge states to form subregional clusters of contests, provide for a more uniform caucus system, and in regard to frontloading, confine all non-exempt states (all those but Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina) to any time between the first week in March and the first week in June. The intention is to return the calendar, at least on the Democratic side, to its pre-2004 state. In other words, there would be no February contests in an uncontested race for the Democratic nomination in 2012.

This particular plan is complicated by the fact that the Republican Party has yet to settle in on its own series of recommendations for 2012, and those plans that have been discussed are not aligned with the beginning point of the window that the Democrats are proposing. This has the effect of leading to a staggered calendar similar to that used during the 2000 nomination cycle, where the Republican Party had a series of February contests following Iowa and New Hampshire and the Democratic Party was idle until Super Tuesday at the beginning of March. That discrepancy between the two parties' calendars during 2000 did not lead to any significant frontloading; not into February at least. Most of the movement that occurred during that cycle was in compliance with both parties' rules – to the earliest allowable date. Those non-exempt states on the Democratic side that had Republican contests in February ended up holding later

caucuses that met with the Democratic Party's rules.

Going in reverse, though, is a different story and entails forcing states to move back in the process. By allowing additional frontloading for the last two cycles of the 2000 decade, the Democratic Party opened itself up to not only the challenges that Florida and Michigan represented, but to the difficult task of enticing states to go later after those challenges to the rules. Indeed, it is difficult enough to motivate states to move to later, party-sanctioned dates, but it is all the more difficult when that decision has to be filtered through the state government. Across the post-reform period, divided government on the state level has proven to be a significant deterrent to frontloading, much less backloading, among primary states.

The intersection of partisanship and the frontloading decision – or in this case the backloading decision – is more problematic when the example of the 2000 calendar is raised. Again, if the Republican Party does not align its rules and simultaneously enforce them with the Democratic Party, Republican-controlled state legislatures/governments will be less inclined to comply with Democratic Party rules regarding the scheduling of delegate selection events. That leaves a handful of states – Arizona, Florida and Georgia among them – that could end up being the Florida or Michigan of the 2012 cycle. And that is without actually acting. Florida and Michigan made the decisions in 2007 to schedule their primaries when they did – out of compliance with both parties' rules. Arizona and Georgia did also, but they did so within the rules governing presidential nominee selection as were constructed by the parties for the 2008 cycle. Without doing anything in terms of changing the scheduling, those states are now out of compliance with the rules proposed by the Democratic Party for 2012. And with Republican-controlled state governments, none of those states is necessarily compelled to shift those dates into compliance unless motivated to do so by a rules change on the part of the Republican

National Committee.

The final piece to this puzzle is that there is less tinkering with the rules when a presidential incumbent is seeking reelection over the course of the 1976-2008 era. That, though, may be more a function of the fact that the incumbent party is less likely to make any changes in an “idle” year. The 2012 cycle may be an exception. The rules defiance from Florida and Michigan during the 2008 cycle and the increased scrutiny of the rules in the face of an intensely competitive Democratic nomination race seem to have served as a catalyst for change in the nomination rules-making process. The result, though, at least in terms of frontloading, is that the Democratic Party – if the Rules and Bylaws Committee makes the Democratic Change Commission recommendations a reality -- has put nineteen states' contests out of compliance ex post facto. The dates on which state law currently has those presidential primary contests scheduled is outside of the window proposed by the the Democratic Party.⁴⁴ While the in-party typically rests on its laurels – or has during most cycles of the post-reform era – the Democrats after 2008, are attempting to codify a reversal of frontloading and not just simply advancing an effort to curb its continuation. That is something that has to this point in the time since 1968 not occurred in either party, much less the party that occupies the White House. Should those rules changes be instituted by the Democratic Party and not followed by the Republicans, it represents a unique opportunity to examine the potential tension between state parties/state governments and the two national parties.

As was mentioned above, the Republican Party is reexamining its rules for presidential delegate selection as well. However, the party of Lincoln, unlike the Democratic Party's approach, has broadened its exploration of rules changes to include far more ambitious

⁴⁴ See Appendix A for an early look at the 2012 presidential primary calendar. It is based on when existing state law has the individual contests scheduled. Nineteen states currently have February contests codified into law.

presidential primary reform plans; plans that would to some extent solve the dilemma of the unable-to-move states that have consistently concluded the delegate selection process. The party's Temporary Delegate Selection Committee has discussed rotating regional primary plans in addition to plans that would allow smaller states to go early and be followed by groups of larger states that would rotate from cycle to cycle. The former is the plan created by the National Association of Secretaries of State and would split the nation into basically the four regions used by the Census. Different regions would go first on a rotating basis, insuring that all states have an opportunity to initially influence the presidential nomination process once every sixteen years (four cycles). The latter plan – the Ohio Plan – nurtures the notion of retail politics; that a candidacy can build itself from the ground up in smaller states before launching a more traditional campaign in the medium and large states. It also allows for some equity in terms of the states that follow that retail politics phase of the campaign. Similar to the regional primary rotation, the clusters of medium and large states would shift from one presidential election season to the next.

The problems associated with these plans are the same as they were in the Democratic Party's more limited proposal and as the ones that have marked the frontloaded era for that matter. And in the aftermath of the Florida and Michigan dilemma of 2008, there is even more to these problems. Essentially, there is a certain give and take between the national parties and the state-level actors charged with setting the dates on which their delegate selection events will be held. In the past, those state-level actors were either willing and/or able to comply with national party rules on event scheduling. During the post-reform era, however, that has translated into a certain level of freedom for states to move to an advantageous spot on the calendar; one that allowed the frontloading decision makers to maximize the influence of their state and/or its

primary voters. These plans increase the tension between state-level decision makers and the national parties; especially if the rules changes are not coordinated between the two. In other words, compliance was an easier enterprise. However, these rules changes proposed or discussed by both major parties would alter that balance and limit the freedom of movement on the state level. That freedom, though, has operated at the expense of fairness across all states and by allowing the emergence of a compressed calendar, has hurt the quality of campaigns (the on-air war is the route of choice for most candidates as opposed to the grassroots ground war) and all but the most well-funded candidates.

The research here demonstrates how obstructive something as simple as whether a state holds its presidential primary concurrently with its state and local primaries can be to a state's ability to shift the date on which its presidential primary is scheduled. Additionally, this does not account for the impact of partisanship within the state governmental apparatus. If the parties do not coordinate their efforts on primary reform, state-level actors of the opposite party will not necessarily be motivated to comply with the rules handed down by the party. That has the effect of increasing the tension between the state-level decision makers and the national parties and that means that the probability of seeing additional rogue states in the Florida and Michigan role would increase. Basically, that would pit a state-level actor of one party against the opposite national party. In that case, the motivation to comply would be absent for primary and caucus states (with state governments and state parties respectively making those scheduling decisions). The ability to move would also be missing for those primary states where the minority party is at the mercy of a majority party. Florida in 2008 is a prime example. Florida Democrats were in the minority in the state legislature and had no say (though a sizable faction of the Democrats in the legislature voted for the move to a date outside of the party-designated window) in the

decision to defy the parties' rules. Later, the state party was forced to decide between breaking the Democratic National Committee's rules or funding a primary or caucus that would meet with those rules.⁴⁵ State Democrats, though, were completely at the mercy of the Republican majority in the state legislature and in the governor's mansion.

The bottom line is that to remove that freedom to move to earlier dates and require states to hold their delegate selection events at a pre-designated time – especially if it is at a less desirable point on the primary calendar than the state occupies according to its state law – is something that simultaneously requires jumping several hurdles on the state level. And as has been shown in this research, those obstacles can prove prohibitive even when states are motivated to move, much less in the instance when they are not.

Future Research

Needless to say, the speculation on the potential rules changes for the 2012 presidential cycle and the obstacles standing in the way of them coming to fruition would warrant additional research beyond the scope of this dissertation. And while the research contained herein addresses the motivation behind and deterrents in the way of the frontloading decision, much continues to be examined to fully explicate not only the frontloading process itself, but the impact it has on the presidential nomination process and other campaigns. One area that has to this point received little attention in the literature is the impact frontloading has on races outside of the one for the White House. For example, in those states where state law requires the presidential primary to be held concurrently with those contests for state and local offices, what is the impact on congressional, gubernatorial or state legislative races? When Illinois and Texas shifted the dates on which their presidential primaries were held they also moved their contests

⁴⁵ Florida Democrats actually chose a third option: to fight to have their full delegation seated at the Democrat's August convention.

for state and local offices. That meant that all the contests were moved to early March dates in Texas in 1988 and again in 2004, and that Illinois found itself holding a February instead of a March contest in 2008. What impact is felt in similar states? Does that alter – depress or increase – turnout in years in which the presidential race is not on the ballot? Do the identities or underlying ideologies of the nominees differ based on those changing turnout levels? Does the lengthened general election campaign following the early primary in any way change the dynamics of the race? Frontloading has been fairly adequately studied at the presidential level, but its impact on downballot races has been understudied to this point.

While the negative impacts of frontloading have been detailed to a great degree, there are still gaps in the literature that need to be filled by future research. As this research has shown, the ability of states to move the date on which their delegate selection events are scheduled is certainly not uniform across all states. Some states are impaired from a structural standpoint while others, either by working within the system or by coincidence, have been able to move more freely in the post-reform era. The early choices made by states in regard to how each would comply with the new rules shaped to some extent how able states were to move in future cycles. Specifically, the decision to couple presidential primary contests with those contests for state and local offices had a significant impact on states being able to move.

Ability is one thing, but willingness is another. One shortcoming of the research contained here is that while the ability of states to move their primaries and caucuses is adequately explored, the willingness in those states is not. Did proposals emerge in late states to move their primaries to earlier dates? That information is out there for the most recent cycles (2004-2008), but it is less clear the level to which states that perhaps did not move in any given cycle, showed a desire to do so in the past. Is a legislative proposal the only indicator of a

willingness to shift a primary date. Obviously, that measure confines the analysis to primary states alone. What about caucus states? Is there a way to measure the willingness of state parties to move the dates on which the first step of those contests are held? Without a legislative record that is a difficult enterprise, but is certainly a potential avenue for additional research.

One final aspect of frontloading that was alluded to earlier but not explored was the pattern of movement over time. Was there a pattern to the diffusion of the frontloading phenomenon as the post-reform period progressed? Is the timing of that decision dependent upon when and how early states move? In other words, has there a bandwagon effect that witnessed one state moving to an early date – the earliest date – only to have other states opt to go on the same date as a means of maximizing the impact of the state's vote on the outcome. What other factors condition the timing of that decision? While the decision to frontload a presidential primary or caucus has been more fully examined from the states' perspective, there still remain question that can be examined and the phenomenon more adequately explained.

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Appendix A: Presidential Primary Calendars, 1976-2012

1976 [Primaries in bold]:

January 19: Iowa caucuses (both parties)

January 24: Mississippi Democratic caucuses

January 27: Hawaii Republican caucuses

February: Maine Democratic caucuses (all month long)

February 4: Wyoming Republican caucuses (all month through March 5)

February 7: Oklahoma Democratic caucuses

February 10: Alaska Democratic caucuses

February 24: Minnesota caucuses (both parties), **New Hampshire primary**

February 28: South Carolina Democratic caucuses

March 2: **Massachusetts primary**, Vermont primary (beauty contest--no delegates at stake), Washington caucuses (both parties)

March 9: Hawaii Democratic caucuses, **Florida primary**

March 12: South Carolina Republican caucuses (through March 13)

March 14: Wyoming Democratic caucuses

March 16: **Illinois primary**

March 19: Kansas Republican caucuses

March 23: Connecticut Republican caucuses, **North Carolina primary**

March 27: Mississippi Republican caucuses

March 29: Maine Republican caucuses

April 3: Kansas Democratic caucuses, Virginia Democratic caucuses

April 5: Oklahoma Republican caucuses

April 6: **New York primary, Wisconsin primary**

April 19: Missouri Republican caucuses (through April 24)

April 20: Missouri Democratic caucuses

April 22: New Mexico Democratic caucuses

April 24: Arizona Democratic caucuses/Republican convention, Vermont caucuses (both parties)

April 25: New Mexico Republican caucuses (through May 1)

April 27: North Dakota Democratic caucuses, **Pennsylvania primary**

May 1: Louisiana Democratic caucuses, North Dakota Republican caucuses (through June 14), **Texas primary**

May 3: Colorado caucuses (both parties)

May 4: **Alabama primary, Georgia primary, Indiana primary**

May 8: Louisiana Republican caucuses (through May 15)

May 11: Connecticut Democratic caucuses, **Nebraska primary, West Virginia primary**

May 14: Virginia Republican caucuses (through May 15)

May 17: Utah caucuses (both parties)

May 22: Alaska Republican caucuses

May 18: **Maryland primary, Michigan primary**

May 25: **Arkansas primary, Idaho primary, Kentucky primary, Nevada primary, Oregon primary, Tennessee primary**

June 1: **Montana primary** (Democrats only, Republican beauty contest--no delegates at stake), **Rhode Island primary, South Dakota primary**

June 8: **California primary, New Jersey primary, Ohio primary**

June 11: Delaware Democratic convention

June 19: Delaware Republican convention

June 26: Montana Republican convention

[Source: Congressional Quarterly and news accounts from 1976. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

1980 [Primaries in bold]:

January 21: Iowa caucuses (both parties)
January 22: Hawaii Republican caucuses

February 1: Maine Republican caucuses (through March 15)
February 2: Arkansas Republican caucuses
February 4: Wyoming Republican caucuses (through March 5)
February 10: Maine Democratic caucuses
February 26: Minnesota caucuses (both parties), **New Hampshire primary**

March: Virginia Republican caucuses (through April)
March 4: **Massachusetts primary**, Vermont primary (beauty contest--no delegates at stake)
March 8: **South Carolina Republican primary** (party-run)
March 11: **Alabama primary**, Alaska Democratic caucuses, **Florida primary**, **Georgia primary**, Hawaii Democratic caucuses, Oklahoma Democratic caucuses, Washington caucuses (both parties)
March 12: Delaware Democratic caucuses
March 15: Mississippi Democratic caucuses, South Carolina Democratic caucuses, Wyoming Democratic caucuses
March 18: **Illinois primary**
March 21: North Dakota Republican caucuses
March 22: Virginia Democratic caucuses
March 25: **Connecticut primary**, **New York primary**

April 1: **Kansas primary**, **Wisconsin primary**
April 5: **Louisiana primary**, Missouri Republican caucuses (through April 12)
April 7: Oklahoma Republican caucuses
April 12: Arizona Democratic caucuses
April 13: Arizona Republican committee meeting (& caucuses)
April 17: Idaho Democratic caucuses
April 19: Alaska Republican convention (through April 20), North Dakota Democratic caucuses
April 22: Missouri Democratic caucuses, **Pennsylvania primary**, Vermont caucuses (both parties)
April 26: Michigan Democratic caucuses
April 30: Delaware Republican committee meeting (& caucuses)

May 3: **Texas primary** (Republicans), Texas Democratic caucuses
May 5: Colorado caucuses (both parties)
May 6: **Indiana primary**, **North Carolina primary**, **Tennessee primary**
May 13: **Maryland primary**, **Nebraska primary**
May 19: Utah caucuses (both parties)
May 20: **Michigan primary** (Republicans), **Oregon primary**
May 27: **Arkansas primary** (Democrats), **Idaho primary** (Republicans), **Kentucky primary**, **Nevada primary**

June 3: **California primary**, **Mississippi Republican primary** (party-run), **Montana primary** (Democrats), **New Jersey primary**, **New Mexico primary**, **Ohio primary**, **Rhode Island primary**, **South Dakota primary**, **West Virginia primary**
June 4: Montana Republican caucuses (through June 12)

[Source: Congressional Quarterly and news accounts from 1980. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

1984 [Primaries in bold]:

February 20: Iowa caucuses (both parties)

February 28: **New Hampshire primary**

March 4: Maine Democratic caucuses

March 10: Wyoming Democratic caucuses

March 13: **Alabama primary, Florida primary, Georgia primary**, Hawaii Democratic caucuses, **Massachusetts primary**, Nevada Democratic caucuses, Oklahoma Democratic caucuses, **Rhode Island primary**, Washington Democratic caucuses

March 14: Delaware Democratic caucuses, North Dakota Democratic caucuses (through March 28)

March 15: Alaska Democratic caucuses

March 17: Arkansas Democratic caucuses, Michigan Democratic caucuses, Mississippi Democratic caucuses, South Carolina Democratic caucuses

March 20: **Illinois primary**, Minnesota Democratic caucuses

March 24: Kansas Democratic caucuses, Virginia Democratic caucuses (and March 26)

March 25: Montana Democratic caucuses

March 27: **Connecticut primary**

March 31: Kentucky Democratic caucuses

April 3: **New York primary, Wisconsin primary** (Republicans only)

April 7: Wisconsin Democratic caucuses

April 10: **Pennsylvania primary**

April 14: Arizona Democratic caucuses

April 18: Missouri Democratic caucuses

April 24: Vermont Democratic caucuses

April 25: Utah Democratic caucuses

May 1: **Tennessee primary**

May 5: Colorado Democratic caucuses, **Louisiana primary**, Texas Democratic caucuses

May 8: **Indiana primary, Maryland primary, North Carolina primary, Ohio primary**

May 15: **Nebraska primary, Oregon primary**

May 24: **Idaho primary** and Democratic caucuses (primary was a beauty contest with no delegates at stake; delegates were allocated through the caucuses)

June 5: **California primary, Mississippi primary** (Republicans only), **Montana primary** (Republicans only), **New Jersey primary, New Mexico primary, South Dakota primary, West Virginia primary**

[Source: Congressional Quarterly and news accounts from 1984. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

1988 [Primaries in bold]:

January 14: Michigan Republican caucus (middle step in delegate allocation -- process began in [August 1986](#))

February 1: Kansas Republican caucuses (through February 7)

February 4: Hawaii Republican caucuses

February 8: Iowa caucuses (both parties)

February 9: Wyoming Republican caucuses (through February 24)

February 16: **New Hampshire primary**

February 18: Nevada Republican caucuses

February 23: Minnesota caucuses (both parties), **South Dakota primary**

February 26: Maine Republican caucuses (through February 28)

February 27: Alaska Republican caucuses (through March 1)

February 28: Maine Democratic caucuses

March 1: **Vermont primary** (beauty contest -- no delegates at stake)

March 5: **South Carolina Republican primary** (party-run), Wyoming Democratic caucuses

March 8: **Alabama primary, Arkansas primary, Florida primary, Georgia primary**, Hawaii Democratic caucuses, Idaho Democratic caucuses, **Kentucky primary, Louisiana primary, Maryland primary, Massachusetts primary, Mississippi primary, Missouri primary**, Nevada Democratic caucuses, **North Carolina primary, Oklahoma primary, Rhode Island primary, Tennessee primary, Texas primary** (Democratic primary-caucus), **Virginia primary**, Washington caucuses (both parties)

March 10: Alaska Democratic caucuses

March 12: South Carolina Democratic caucuses

March 15: **Illinois primary**

March 19: Kansas Democratic caucuses

March 26: Michigan Democratic caucuses

March 27: North Dakota Democratic caucuses

March 29: **Connecticut primary**

April 4: Colorado caucuses (both parties)

April 5: Delaware Republican caucuses (through April 25), **Wisconsin primary**

April 16: Arizona Democratic caucuses

April 18: Delaware Democratic caucuses

April 19: **New York primary**, Vermont caucuses (both parties)

April 25: Utah caucuses (both parties)

April 26: **Pennsylvania primary**

May 3: **Indiana primary, Ohio primary**

May 10: **Nebraska primary, West Virginia primary**

May 14: Arizona Republican convention (end of multi-tiered caucus process which began in 1986)

May 17: **Oregon primary**

May 24: **Idaho primary** (Republicans only),

June 7: **California primary, Montana primary, New Jersey primary, New Mexico primary**

June 14: **North Dakota primary** (Republicans only)

[Source: Congressional Quarterly and news accounts from 1988. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

1992 [Primaries in bold]:

January (late): Hawaii Republican precinct caucuses

January - March: North Dakota Republican precinct caucuses

January - May: Virginia Republican local meetings

February 2: Nevada Republican caucuses (through February 29)

February 10: Iowa caucuses (both parties)

February 18: **New Hampshire primary**

February 23: Maine caucuses (both parties)

February 25: **South Dakota primary**

March 2: Alaska Republican caucuses

March 3: **Colorado primary, Georgia primary**, Idaho Democratic caucuses, **Maryland primary**, Minnesota Democratic caucuses, Utah Democratic caucuses, Washington Democratic caucuses

March 5: North Dakota Democratic caucuses (through March 19)

March 7: Arizona caucuses (Both parties, but the GOP caucuses had no presidential preference. Those delegates selected at those caucuses went to the state convention -- 5/10/1992 -- where national convention delegate allocation took place.), **South Carolina primary** (party-run), Wyoming caucuses (Both parties, but Republicans meet through March 11)

March 8: Nevada Democratic caucuses

March 10: Delaware Democratic caucuses, **Florida primary**, Hawaii Democratic caucuses, **Louisiana primary, Massachusetts primary, Mississippi primary**, Missouri Democratic caucuses, **Oklahoma primary, Rhode Island primary, Tennessee primary, Texas primary** (& Democratic caucuses)

March 17: **Illinois primary, Michigan primary**

March 24: **Connecticut primary**

March 31: Vermont caucuses (both parties)

April - May: Hawaii Republican regional caucuses

April 2: Alaska Democratic caucuses, North Dakota Republican convention (through April 5)

April 7: **Kansas primary, Minnesota primary** (Republicans only), **New York primary** (Republicans had no presidential preference on ballot; just delegates), **Wisconsin primary**

April 11: Virginia Democratic caucuses (& April 13)

April 14: Missouri Republican caucuses

April 27: Utah Republican caucuses

April 28: **Pennsylvania primary**

May 5: **Indiana primary, North Carolina primary**

May 9: Delaware Republican convention

May 10: Arizona Republican convention

May 12: **Nebraska primary, West Virginia primary**

May 19: **Oregon primary, Washington primary** (Republicans only)

May 26: **Arkansas primary, Idaho primary** (Republicans only), **Kentucky primary**

May 29: Virginia Republican convention (through May 30, no formal process)

June 2: **Alabama primary, California primary, Montana primary** (Democrats only), **New Jersey primary, New Mexico primary, Ohio primary**

June 9: **North Dakota primary** (beauty contest for both parties)

July 9-11: Montana Republican convention (no formal process)

[Source: Congressional Quarterly and news accounts from 1992. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

1996 [Primaries in bold]:

January 11: [Ohio Democratic caucuses](#)

January 25: Hawaii Republican caucuses (through January 31)

January 27: Alaska Republican caucuses (through January 29)

February 6: Louisiana Republican caucuses (21 delegates)

February 12: Iowa caucuses (both parties)

February 20: **New Hampshire primary**

February 24: **Delaware primary**

February 27: **Arizona primary** (Republicans only), **North Dakota primary** (Republicans only), **South Dakota primary** (Republicans only)

March: Virginia Republican caucuses

March 2: **South Carolina primary** (Republicans only -- party-run), Wyoming Republican caucuses

March 5: **Colorado primary**, **Connecticut primary**, **Georgia primary**, Idaho Democratic caucuses, **Maine primary**, **Maryland primary**, **Massachusetts primary**, Minnesota caucuses (both parties), **Rhode Island primary**, South Carolina Democratic caucuses, **Vermont primary**, Washington caucuses (both parties)

March 7: Missouri Democratic caucuses, **New York primary**

March 9: Alaska Democratic caucuses, Arizona Democratic caucuses, Missouri Republican caucuses, South Dakota Democratic caucuses

March 10: Nevada Democratic caucuses

March 12: **Florida primary**, Hawaii Democratic caucuses, **Louisiana primary** (both parties -- 9 GOP delegates), **Mississippi primary**, **Oklahoma primary**, **Oregon primary**, **Tennessee primary**, **Texas primary** (both parties and Democratic caucuses)

March 16: Michigan Democratic caucuses

March 19: **Illinois primary**, **Michigan primary** (Republicans only), **Ohio primary** (Republicans only), **Wisconsin primary**

March 23: Wyoming Democratic caucuses

March 25: Utah caucuses (both parties)

March 26: **California primary**, **Nevada primary** (Republicans only), **Washington primary** (Republicans only)

March 29: North Dakota Democratic caucuses

April 2: **Kansas primary** ([canceled](#) -- Republican State Committee chose delegates)

April 13: Virginia Democratic caucuses (and April 15)

April 23: **Pennsylvania primary**

May 7: **Indiana primary**, **North Carolina primary**

May 14: **Nebraska primary**, **West Virginia primary**

May 21: **Arkansas primary**

May 28: **Idaho primary** (Republicans only), **Kentucky primary**

June 4: **Alabama primary**, **Montana primary** (Democrats only, Republican beauty contest -- no delegates at stake), **New Jersey primary**, **New Mexico primary**

June 5: Montana Republican caucuses (through June 13)

[Source: Congressional Quarterly and news accounts from 1996. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

2000 [Primaries in bold]:

January 24: Iowa caucuses (both parties)

February 1: **New Hampshire primary**

February 5: **Delaware primary** (Democrats only, Beauty contest -- no delegates at stake)

February 7: Hawaii Republican caucuses (through February 13)

February 8: **Delaware primary** (Republicans only, party-run)

February 19: South Carolina Republican primary (party-run)

February 22: **Arizona primary** (Republicans only), **Michigan primary** (Republicans only)

February 23: Alaska Republican caucuses, Nevada Republican caucuses (through March 21)

February 29: North Dakota Republicans caucuses, **Virginia primary** (Republicans only), **Washington primary** (Democratic beauty contest -- no delegates at stake)

March 7: **California primary, Connecticut primary, Georgia primary**, Hawaii Democratic caucuses, Idaho Democratic caucuses, **Maine primary, Maryland primary, Massachusetts primary, Missouri primary**, Minnesota Republican caucuses, **New York primary**, North Dakota Democratic caucuses, **Ohio primary, Rhode Island primary, Vermont primary**, Washington caucuses (both parties)

March 9: South Carolina Democratic caucuses (party-run, "firehouse" primary)

March 10: **Colorado primary, Utah primary**, Wyoming Republican caucuses

March 11: Arizona Democratic caucuses, Michigan Democratic caucuses, Minnesota Democratic caucuses

March 12: Nevada Democratic caucuses

March 14: **Florida primary, Louisiana primary, Mississippi primary, Oklahoma primary, Tennessee primary, Texas primary** (both parties & Democratic caucuses)

March 18: Kentucky Republican caucuses

March 21: **Illinois primary**

March 25: Wyoming Democratic caucuses

March 27: Delaware Democratic caucuses

April 4: **Pennsylvania primary, Wisconsin primary**

April 15: Virginia Democratic caucuses (& April 17)

April 22: Alaska Democratic caucuses

May 2: **Indiana primary, North Carolina primary**

May 6: Kansas Democratic caucuses

May 9: **Nebraska primary, West Virginia primary**

May 16: **Oregon primary**

May 23: **Arkansas primary, Idaho primary** (Republicans only), **Kentucky primary** (Democrats only)

May 25: Kansas Republican convention

June 6: **Alabama primary, Montana primary, New Jersey primary, New Mexico primary, South Dakota primary**

[Source: [The Green Papers](#) and news accounts from 2000. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

2004 [Primaries in bold]:

January 2: Maine Republican caucuses (through March 19)
January 17: South Carolina Republican caucuses (through February 21)
January 19: Iowa caucuses (both parties)
January 25: Hawaii Republican caucuses (through February 7)
January 27: **New Hampshire primary**

February 1: North Carolina Republican caucuses (through March 31)
February 3: **Arizona primary** (Democrats only), **Delaware primary** (Democrats only), **Missouri primary**, New Mexico Democratic caucuses, North Dakota caucuses, **Oklahoma primary**, **South Carolina primary** (Democrats only, party-run), Wyoming Republican caucuses (through February 29)
February 4: Virginia Republican caucuses (through April 4)
February 7: **Michigan primary** (Democrats only, party-run), Washington Democratic caucuses, Louisiana Republican caucuses
February 8: Maine Democratic caucuses
February 10: Nevada Republican caucuses, **Tennessee primary**, **Virginia primary** (Democrats only)
February 14: Nevada Democratic caucuses
February 17: **Wisconsin primary**
February 21: Alaska Republican caucuses (through April 17)
February 24: Hawaii Democratic caucuses, Idaho Democratic caucuses, **Utah primary** (party-run)

March 1: Delaware Republican caucuses (through May 15 -- State convention), Kansas Republican caucuses (through June 15)
March 2: **California primary**, **Connecticut primary** (Republican canceled), **Georgia primary**, **Maryland primary**, **Massachusetts primary**, Minnesota caucuses (both parties), **New York primary** (Republican canceled), **Ohio primary**, **Rhode Island primary**, **Vermont primary**
March 6: Wyoming Democratic caucuses (through March 20)
March 9: **Florida primary** (Republican canceled), **Louisiana primary**, **Mississippi primary** (Republican canceled), North Carolina Democratic caucuses, **Texas primary** (both parties & Democratic caucuses), Washington Republican caucuses
March 13: Kansas Democratic caucuses
March 16: **Illinois primary**
March 20: Alaska Democratic caucuses
March 23: Utah Republican caucuses

April 3: Arizona Republican caucuses (through April 17)
April 13: Colorado caucuses (both parties)
April 27: **Pennsylvania primary**

May 4: **Indiana primary**
May 11: **Nebraska primary**, **West Virginia primary**
May 18: **Arkansas primary**, **Kentucky primary**, **Oregon primary**
May 25: **Idaho primary** (Republicans only)

June 1: **Alabama primary**, **New Mexico primary** (Republicans only), **South Dakota primary** (Republicans canceled)
June 8: **Montana primary** (Democrats only, Republican beauty contest -- no delegates at stake), **New Jersey primary**
June 10: Montana Republican convention (through June 12)

[Source: [The Green Papers](#) and news accounts from 2004. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

2008 [Primaries in bold]:

January 3: Iowa caucuses

January 5: Wyoming Republican caucuses

January 8: **New Hampshire primary**

January 15: **Michigan primary**

January 19: Nevada caucuses (both parties), **South Carolina Republican primary** (party-run, state-funded)

January 26: **South Carolina Democratic primary** (party-run, state-funded)

January 29: **Florida primary**

February 1: Maine Republican caucuses (through February 3)

February 5: **Alabama primary**, Alaska caucuses (both parties), **Arkansas primary**, **California primary**, Colorado caucuses (both parties), **Connecticut primary**, **Delaware primary**, **Georgia primary**, Idaho Democratic caucuses, **Illinois primary**, Kansas Democratic caucuses, **Massachusetts primary**, Minnesota caucuses (both parties), **Missouri primary**, Montana Republican caucuses, North Dakota caucuses (both parties), **New Jersey primary**, **New Mexico Democratic primary** (party-run), **New York primary**, **Oklahoma primary**, **Tennessee primary**, **Utah primary**, West Virginia Republican state presidential convention,

February 9: Kansas Republican caucuses, **Louisiana primary**, Nebraska Democratic caucuses, Washington caucuses (both parties)

February 10: Maine Democratic caucuses

February 12: **Maryland primary**, **Virginia primary**

February 19: Hawaii Democratic caucuses, **Washington primary** (Republicans only), **Wisconsin primary**

March 4: **Ohio primary**, **Rhode Island primary**, **Texas primary** (both parties & Democratic caucuses), **Vermont primary**

March 8: Wyoming Democratic caucuses

March 11: **Mississippi primary**

April 22: **Pennsylvania primary**

May 6: **Indiana primary**, **North Carolina primary**

May 13: **West Virginia primary**, **Nebraska primary** (Republicans only)

May 16: Hawaii Republican state convention (through May 17)

May 20: **Kentucky primary**, **Oregon primary**

May 27: **Idaho primary** (Republicans only)

June 3: **Montana primary** (Democrats only), **South Dakota primary**

[Source: [The Green Papers](#) and news accounts from 2008. The latter was used to double-check the dates or discover missing ones.]

2012:

Tuesday, January 31: [Florida](#)

Tuesday, February 7 (Super Tuesday): Alabama, California, Connecticut, Delaware, [Georgia](#), Missouri, [New Jersey](#), New York, Oklahoma, Tennessee and Utah

Saturday, February 11: Louisiana

Tuesday, February 14: Maryland, Virginia

Tuesday, February 21: Wisconsin

Tuesday, February 28: Arizona, Michigan

Tuesday, March 6: *Minnesota caucuses*, Massachusetts, Ohio, Rhode Island, [Texas](#) and Vermont

Tuesday, March 13: Mississippi

Tuesday, March 20: *Colorado caucuses*, Illinois

Tuesday, April 24: Pennsylvania

Tuesday, May 8: Indiana, [North Carolina](#) and West Virginia

Tuesday, May 15: Nebraska, [Oregon](#)

Tuesday, May 22: Arkansas, Idaho, Kentucky

Tuesday, June 5: Montana, New Mexico and South Dakota

Appendix B: Variable Operationalizations

Dependent Variable:

Frontloading Decision: 1=frontloading move made, 0=no move

Independent Variables:

Structural

Previous position: This variable was coded by counting the weeks of each primary calendar. The last week was coded one the count increased until the week of the Iowa caucus.

Decision maker: 2=individual (governor, secretary of state), 1=state party, 0=state government

Primary: 1=state-funded primary state, 0=not

Split primaries: 1=separate primaries, 0=concurrent primaries

Previous move: 1=frontloading move in previous cycle, 0=no move

Window: 1=cycle in which the window was expanded to include earlier dates, 0=no expansion

Earliest date: 1=contest scheduled on the earliest allowable date in the previous cycle, 0=not

Political

Incumbency: 1=incumbent president seeking reelection, 0=open seat

Unified out party: 1=party out of White House controls state government, 0=not

Inter-branch divided government: 1=divided government between executive and legislative branches, 0=not

Inter-chamber divided government: 1=divided legislature, 0=not

Economic

Delegates: The percentage of total delegates a state held in the previous cycle.

Attention: The bridged version of this data found an overlap year in the data that allowed for a bridge to be constructed between Federal Election Commission spending data from the 1976-1996 cycles and the candidate visits and advertising buy data from the three elections during the 2000s. The 1976-1996 model has both the percentage of total candidate spending and the percentage of media coverage (Gurian and Haynes, 1993), while the full model employs the bridged data which predicts candidate spending in the years it was missing based on the ads and visits data. It is also measured as a percentage of the national total of attention.

Cultural

Government ideology: Berry et al.(2007) measure of government ideology where 0=most conservative and 100=most liberal.

State citizen ideology: Berry et al. (2007) measure of government ideology where 0=most conservative and 100=most liberal.

Neighbor movement: This is coded as the percentage of bordering states that made a frontloading move in the previous cycle.