



The Long Campaign for President

The United States elects a president every four years in a general election held in November.

Candidates begin running for president, unofficially at least, two years before the election is held.

While many people start the race for president, the two major political parties field only one candidate each. These two candidates -- one Democrat, one Republican -- are chosen in a series of primary elections held in most states in the first part of the election year. They are formally nominated in party conventions held during the summer.

This presentation outlines the process and history of presidential primaries in the United States.



The major candidates for 2008, starting at the top, from left to right: Joe Biden (D), Hillary Clinton (D), Chris Dodd (D), John Edwards (D), Rudy Giuliani (R), Mike Gravel (D), Mike Huckabee (R), Duncan Hunter (R), Dennis Kucinich (D), John McCain (R), Barack Obama (D), Ron Paul (R), Bill Richardson (D), Mitt Romney (R), Tom Tancredo (R), Fred Thompson (R).

Primary Elections Explained

Anyone can run for president who was born in the United States and is at least 35 years of age. Many people do run. The primary process starts with any number of candidates for their party's nomination and whittles it down to one.

Voters in state primaries elect delegates who are pledged to support a particular candidate at their party's nominating convention in the summer.

Each state is assigned by the national party a number of delegates to its convention. The number is determined by a state's population. Larger states have more delegates than smaller ones. This means that candidates must win or place highly in a number of different primaries.



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Primary Elections Explained

Normally, the outcomes of primaries held early in the year greatly influence who wins in later primaries. As a result, candidates spend more time and money in states with early primaries. More states, in turn, are scheduling their elections earlier than in previous years.

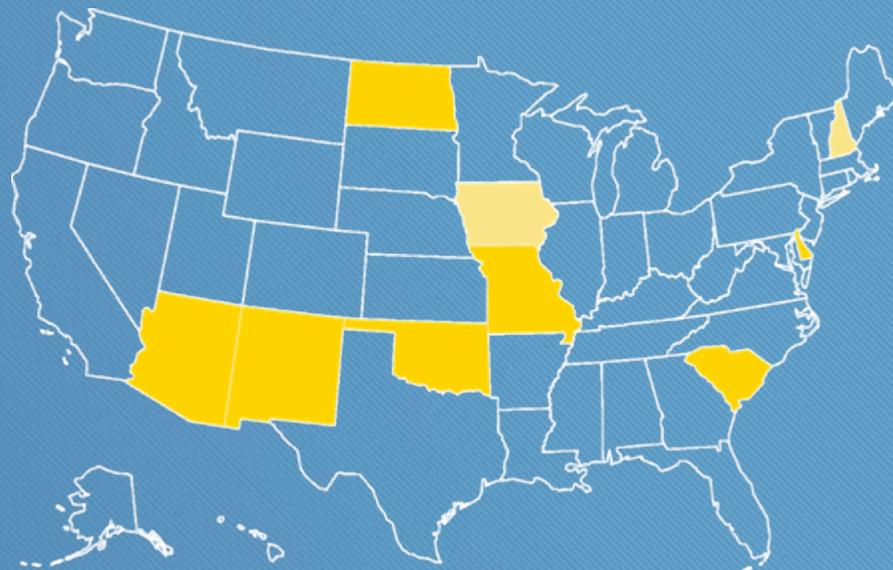
Top: Democrat Chris Dodd meets voters in rainy New Hampshire November 3. Center: Republican Rudy Giuliani visits a café in California December 11. Bottom: Republican Mike Huckabee greets supporters in Iowa March 27. (All ©AP Images)





Primary Elections Explained

For example, in 2004 only nine states held primaries before February 5. In 2008 at least 22 states will have held elections on or before February 5.



Primaries or caucuses on or before February 5, 2008

January 19
Iowa caucuses

January 27
New Hampshire

February 3

Arizona
Delaware
Missouri
Oklahoma
South Carolina (Dem.)
New Mexico caucus (Dem.)
North Dakota caucuses

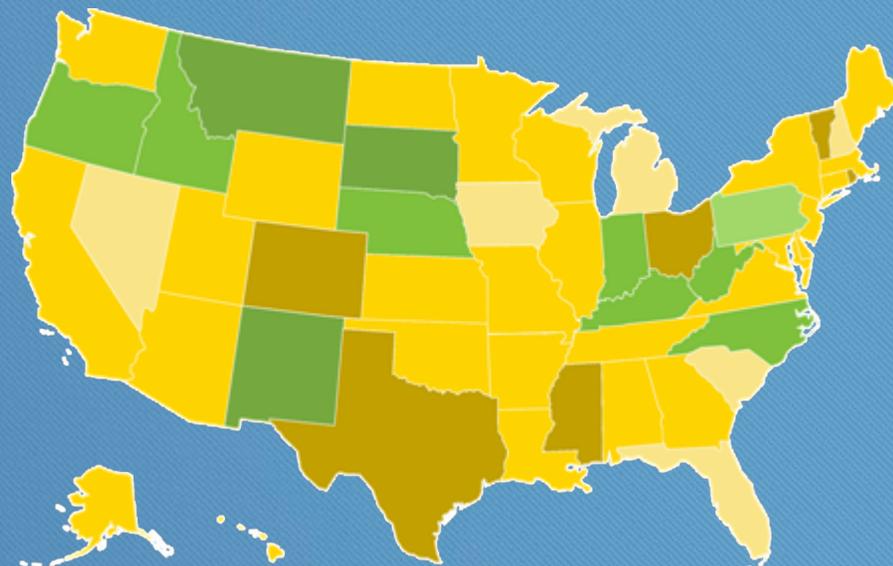


U.S. Elections 2008 - The Primary Season



Primary Elections Explained

The season begins January 3, 2008 with party caucuses in Iowa. By the end of February, more than half of the delegates will have been chosen, and by spring the Democratic and Republican nominees for president may have been decided.



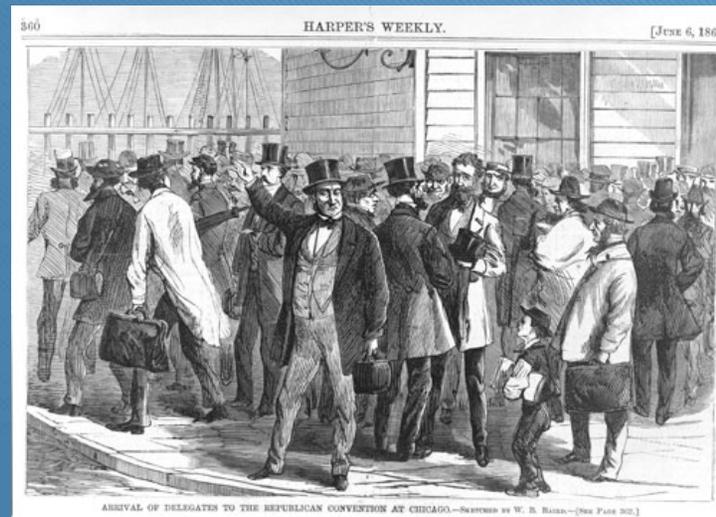
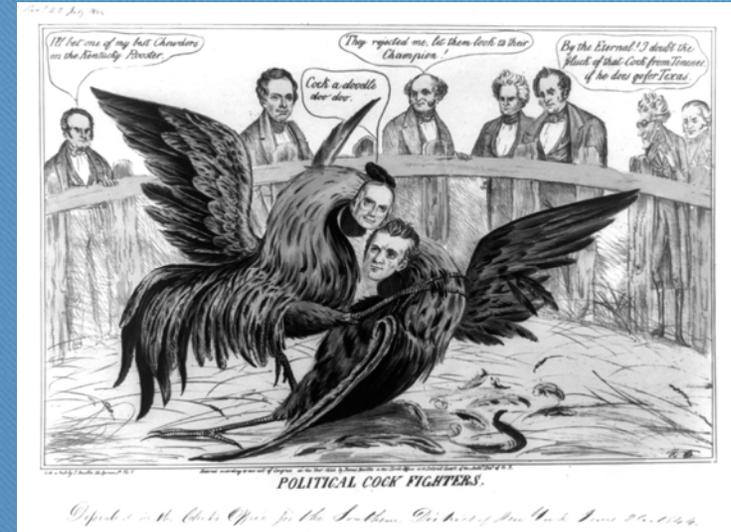
2008 Presidential Primaries and Caucuses

January 3 <i>Iowa caucuses</i>	February 1 <i>Maine caucus (Rep.)</i>	February 5 cont. <i>New Jersey</i> <i>New Mexico caucus (Dem.)</i>	February 12 <i>District of Columbia (Rep.)</i> <i>Maryland</i> <i>Pennsylvania (Rep.)</i> <i>Virginia</i>	March 4 <i>Ohio</i> <i>Rhode Island</i> <i>Texas</i> <i>Vermont</i>	April 5 <i>Virgin Islands (Rep.)</i>	May 17 <i>Hawaii caucus (Rep.)</i>
January 5 <i>Wyoming (Rep.)</i>	February 5 <i>Alabama</i> <i>Alaska caucuses</i> <i>Arizona</i> <i>Arkansas</i> <i>California</i> <i>Colorado caucuses</i> <i>Connecticut</i> <i>Delaware</i> <i>Georgia</i> <i>Idaho caucus (Dem.)</i> <i>Illinois</i> <i>Kansas caucus (Dem.)</i> <i>Massachusetts</i> <i>Minnesota caucuses</i> <i>Missouri</i> <i>Montana caucus (Rep.)</i>	February 9 <i>Kansas caucus (Rep.)</i> <i>Louisiana</i> <i>Nebraska caucus (Dem.)</i> <i>Washington caucuses</i> <i>Virgin Islands (Dem.)</i>	February 16 <i>Guam (Rep.)</i>	March 8 <i>Wyoming caucus (Dem.)</i>	April 22 <i>Pennsylvania (Dem.)</i>	May 20 <i>Kentucky</i> <i>Oregon</i>
January 8 <i>New Hampshire</i>		February 19 <i>Hawaii caucus (Dem.)</i> <i>Washington</i> <i>Wisconsin</i>	February 19 <i>Hawaii caucus (Dem.)</i> <i>Washington</i> <i>Wisconsin</i>	March 10 <i>American Samoa (Dem.)</i>	May 3 <i>Guam (Dem.)</i>	May 27 <i>Idaho (Rep.)</i>
January 15 <i>Michigan</i>		March 1 <i>American Samoa caucus (Rep.)</i>	March 1 <i>American Samoa caucus (Rep.)</i>	March 11 <i>Mississippi</i>	May 6 <i>Indiana</i> <i>North Carolina</i>	June 3 <i>Montana</i> <i>South Dakota</i>
January 19 <i>Nevada caucuses</i> <i>South Carolina (Rep.)</i>		March 10 <i>American Samoa (Dem.)</i>	March 10 <i>American Samoa (Dem.)</i>	April 3 <i>District of Columbia caucus (Dem.)</i>	May 13 <i>Nebraska (Rep.)</i> <i>West Virginia</i>	June 7 <i>Puerto Rico</i>
January 26 <i>South Carolina (Dem.)</i>						
January 29 <i>Florida</i>		February 10 <i>Maine caucus (Dem.)</i>				



The Evolving Primary Elections

In the 1830s the parties began meeting in national conventions to choose their candidates for president. Convention delegates were chosen by local political leadership from the various states. Nominating conventions were often fierce battles between competing factions, and the outcome was not clear until the end of the convention.



Top: Print showing the 1844 presidential contest as a cockfight between the Democratic candidate and his Whig opponent. Bottom: Arrival of the delegates to the 1868 Republican convention in Chicago, Illinois. (All Library of Congress.)



The Evolving Primary Elections

By the turn of the 20th century this system was widely condemned as deal-making by a few party bosses in "smoke-filled rooms."

To make the process more democratic states began choosing their convention delegates in open primary elections or in party caucuses.

The system did not flourish, however. By the 1920s conventions were once again ruled by factional politics and many, sometimes dozens, of ballots were required to choose a presidential candidate.

Top: *McClure's* magazine in 1905 published this drawing depicting political bosses in a "smoke-filled room." Center: William Howard Taft campaigning in Trenton, New Jersey, in 1912. Bottom: The National Democratic Convention of June 1932 in Chicago, showing a rally for presidential candidate Alfred E. Smith. The Democrats, however, selected Franklin D. Roosevelt as their standard bearer that year. (Top, Library of Congress, two others, © AP Images.)



The Evolving Primary Elections

In the 1950s and 1960s television helped to democratize the process with live coverage of the conventions, encouraging parties to widen participation in the nominating process. A vibrant press ensured that state-wide primary elections could get national attention.

Candidates began using primaries to prove to their party's leadership that they could win elections. Since 1976, every major-party candidate has secured all the votes required for nomination before the start of the convention.



Top: Dwight Eisenhower, who would be elected president later in 1952, watching the Republican National Convention in Chicago with his wife, Mamie. Center: Two contenders for the Democratic presidential nomination in 1960, Hubert H. Humphrey, left, and John F. Kennedy, right, after the Wisconsin primary. Bottom: Four years before winning the presidency, Ronald Reagan (right) campaigned in New Hampshire in 1976. (Top, Library of Congress, two others, ©AP Images.)

Retail Politics on a National Scale

As primaries have become more important, the number of states holding them has more than doubled, and states have been holding them earlier in the calendar year.

Because the first primaries mean so much, candidates work hard to meet voters face to face, and talk to many of them in small groups or even individually. This "retail politics" brings a personal touch to campaigning that is seldom possible during the larger general election campaign.



Some of the 2008 presidential candidates reaching out for voter support: (clockwise from top) Senator Hillary Clinton in New Hampshire, Representative Duncan Hunter in Iowa, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney in Iowa, and former Alaska Senator Mike Gravel in New Hampshire. (All ©AP Images.)

Retail Politics on a National Scale

At the same time, reporters from local and national media closely follow these primary elections, bringing the candidates' views and personalities to wide national attention via television, newspapers, magazines, radio, and the Internet.



Candidates deal with the new and the old media to get their message to voters: (clockwise from top) Representative Dennis Kucinich talks to reporters after a primary debate in New Hampshire, a reporter interviews Senator Barack Obama in New Hampshire, Senator John McCain preparing for a program on Iowa Public Television, Drake University student Chris Woods (right) works on his blog as he listens to New Mexico Governor Bill Richardson speak to a group of bloggers in Iowa. (All ©AP Images.)

Retail Politics on a National Scale

Media judge front runners by several criteria — placement on polls of potential voters, the amount of money each candidate has raised for the campaign, and their performances in the increasing number of televised debates.



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POLL: No Huckaboom in N.H. as Romney Holds Tough

Mitt Romney leads in N.H. on the strength of issues and personal attributes.

Your Opinion

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WHAT OTHERS ARE SAYING 78 Comments

I think it's fantastic that we have all th...
Think-A-Sec Dec-16

.....If you vote for Mike.....,That's one f...
kennehleemay Dec-13

*This election should not be about
*first ...
waltgoshert Dec-13

ANALYSIS by GARY LANGER
Dec. 5, 2007

Romney leads in New Hampshire one month before primary. (AP Photo)

The forces pulling Mike Huckabee to the fore in Iowa are fizzling 1,300 miles to the east, where, in New

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COMMENT



Above: Democratic presidential hopefuls, left to right, Sen. Hillary Clinton, Sen. Joseph Biden, Gov. Bill Richardson, former Sen. John Edwards, Sen. Barack Obama, Rep. Dennis Kucinich, former Governor Mike Gravel, and Sen. Christopher Dodd during a PBS televised debate at Howard University, June 28, 2007. (©AP Images.)

U.S. Elections 2008 - The Primary Season



Retail Politics on a National Scale

For 2008 an estimated 500 different state and national polls will survey the American public on many issues. Candidates watch these polls closely, adjusting their messages, schedules, and spending in hopes of improving their chances of winning.



A collage of various election poll websites and news reports. At the top is the Rasmussen Reports website for the 2008 South Carolina Democratic primary. Below it are screenshots from ABC News, FOX News, and The New York Times. The FOX News screenshot shows a 'New Hampshire - 2008 Presidential Polls' page with a table of candidates and their support. The New York Times screenshot shows a 'POLL' section with a line graph titled 'RCP Poll Average: Republican Presidential Nomination' and a table of candidates. The ABC News screenshot shows a 'USA ELECTION POLLS' page with a 'POLL: No Huckabee' headline. The FOX News screenshot also shows a 'FOX News/Opinion Dynamics Poll' for New Hampshire with a line graph and a table of candidates.



Above: Republican presidential hopeful Tom Tancredo, left, before a radio talk show appearance in Des Moines, Iowa. (©AP Images.) Right: Independent polls regularly track candidates' standing with potential voters.

Retail Politics on a National Scale

An estimated \$1 billion was spent on the 2004 presidential election, a 50 percent increase over spending in the 2000 campaign. The cost of the 2008 election will certainly be higher. Campaign fundraising and spending are highly regulated by law, and periodically reported by the various candidates.



Democratic Candidates							
CANDIDATE	HOME STATE	Q3 RAISED	Q3 SPENT	TOTAL RAISED	TOTAL SPENT	CASH ON HAND	DEBTS
Clinton, Hillary	NY	\$27,859,861	\$22,623,680	\$90,935,788	\$40,472,775	\$50,463,013	\$2,347,486
Obama, Barack	IL	\$21,343,292	\$21,519,790	\$80,256,427	\$44,169,236	\$36,087,191	\$1,409,740
Edwards, John	NC	\$7,157,233	\$8,271,938	\$30,329,152	\$17,932,103	\$12,397,048	\$0
Richardson, Bill	NM	\$5,358,585	\$6,686,681	\$18,699,937	\$12,878,349	\$5,821,588	\$75,222
Dodd, Chris	CT	\$1,522,061	\$4,025,458	\$13,598,152	\$9,723,278	\$3,874,874	\$0
Biden, Joe	DE	\$1,757,394	\$2,635,896	\$8,215,739	\$6,329,324	\$1,886,340	\$128,210
Kucinich, Dennis	OH	\$1,011,696	\$888,774	\$2,130,200	\$1,803,576	\$327,094	\$0
Gravel, Mike	AK	\$130,510	\$99,866	\$238,745	\$207,604	\$31,141	\$64,716

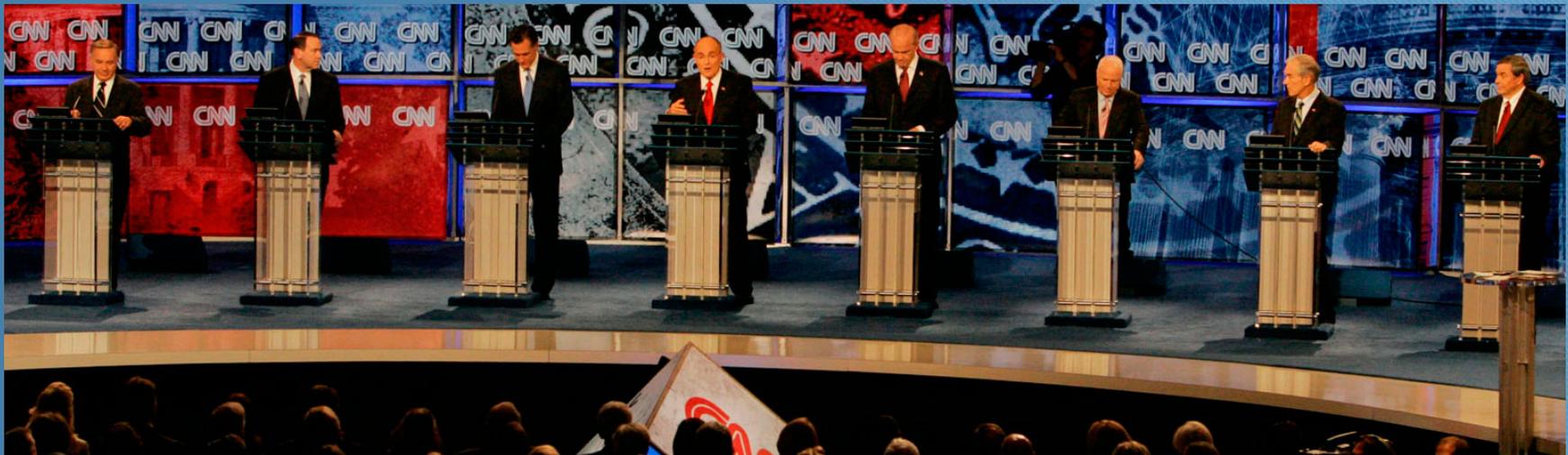
Republican Candidates							
CANDIDATE	HOME STATE	Q3 RAISED	Q3 SPENT	TOTAL RAISED	TOTAL SPENT	CASH ON HAND	DEBTS
Romney, Mitt	MA	\$18,396,719	\$21,301,756	\$62,829,069	\$53,612,552	\$9,216,517	\$17,350,000
Giuliani, Rudy	NY	\$11,624,255	\$13,300,650	\$47,253,521	\$30,603,695	\$16,649,826	\$169,256
McCain, John	AZ	\$5,734,478	\$5,470,277	\$32,124,785	\$28,636,157	\$3,488,628	\$1,730,691
Thompson, Fred	TN	\$12,828,111	\$5,706,367	\$12,828,111	\$5,706,367	\$7,121,744	\$678,432
Paul, Ron	TX	\$5,258,456	\$2,169,644	\$8,268,453	\$2,824,786	\$5,443,667	\$0
Brownback, Sam	KS	\$925,745	\$1,278,856	\$4,235,333	\$4,140,660	\$94,654	\$0
Tancredo, Tom	CO	\$767,152	\$1,209,583	\$3,538,244	\$3,458,130	\$110,079	\$295,603
Huckabee, Mike	AR	\$1,034,486	\$819,376	\$2,345,798	\$1,694,497	\$651,301	\$47,810
Hunter, Duncan	CA	\$536,357	\$618,117	\$1,890,873	\$1,758,132	\$132,742	\$50,000
Keyes, Alan	MD	\$21,218	\$10,139	\$22,768	\$10,139	\$12,629	\$12,876

Above: candidates' financial statements, third quarter 2007. (Opensecrets.org). Left: Republican presidential candidate Fred Thompson poses with a supporter at a fundraiser in Richmond, Virginia. (©AP Images.)



Retail Politics on a National Scale

Democrats held six candidate debates during the 2004 primaries. For 2008 no fewer than 22 candidate debates were scheduled. Republican candidates had 10 debates in the same time frame.



Top: Democratic primary debate hosted by Univision, a Spanish-language network, September 9, 2007. Above: Republican candidates at the CNN/YouTube debate of November 28, 2007, from left to right, Rep. Tom Tancredo, former Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, former Massachusetts Governor Mitt Romney, former New York City Mayor Rudy Giuliani, former Sen. Fred Thompson, Sen. John McCain, Rep. Ron Paul, and Rep. Duncan Hunter. (All ©AP Images.)

Primary Lessons

The primary elections choose the major candidates for the general election for president.

The history of primary elections shows a steady growth of democracy in U.S. elections.

While no one knows in January 2008 who the Republican and Democratic standard-bearers will be, the outcome could be decided by spring.



Clockwise from top: Democratic presidential candidate John Edwards talks with a voter at a restaurant in Iowa City, Iowa; Sen. Joe Biden (left), another contender for the Democratic nomination, and reporters in Manchester, New Hampshire; Rep. Ron Paul (right), a Republican contender, signs an autograph in Des Moines, Iowa. (All ©AP Images.)



U.S. Department of State / Bureau of International Information Programs

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