



For Immediate Release
Kay Stimson
Director of Communications
202.624.3528
nass@sso.org
January 1, 2011

Fact Sheet: 2008 Calendar and the NASS Rotating Regional Presidential Primaries Plan

The NASS Rotating Regional Primaries Plan is a bipartisan proposal designed by state officials (approved in 1999) to establish a reasonable, orderly and fair process of selecting presidential nominees, with an emphasis on increasing voter participation.

2008 PRIMARY PROBLEMS: FRONTLOADING AND FAIRNESS

Increased Frontloading of the Calendar

Frontloading is the shift in state nominating contests towards the front of the calendar, a trend that reached an all-time extreme in 2008 with 37 states (plus DC) voting by the end of February, compared to nine in 2000. Eighteen states alone moved up their primary/caucus for 2008; if you add in the 10 states that did not hold a presidential primary in 2004 but decided to do so in 2008, the actual number is 28. The compressed schedule gives highly-funded candidates with national name recognition an unfair advantage from the start, and it pushes campaign season into the busy holiday period between Thanksgiving and New Year's Eve, creating challenges for campaigns, election officials and voters alike.

Lack of Fairness in the Process

Candidates, voters, and political party members are increasingly frustrated with and confused by our seemingly arbitrary and chaotic process. It pits states against each other when it comes to establishing voting order and makes it harder and more expensive for all candidates to have a fair shot at competing. They want a logical, orderly and neutral process that gives every state and its voters a reasonable opportunity to play a role in the selection of the presidential nominees with results that are representative of all regions of the country. Candidates deserve a system that cannot be manipulated to unfairly advantage or disadvantage any particular party, faction or individual.

THE SOLUTION FOR 2012 AND BEYOND: THE NASS ROTATING REGIONAL PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES PLAN

No State or Region Dominates the Selection Process

The NASS plan divides the country into four regions by geography: East, South, Midwest and West. Regional primaries are held in March, April, May and June, with the order of the regions rotating every four years. A lottery drawing determines the order of the regions the first time the system goes into effect. The next presidential election year, the region that voted first moves to the end of the sequence, and the other regions move forward. (As a result, each region goes first every 16 years). Meanwhile, New Hampshire and Iowa retain their early status to allow under-funded and lesser-known candidates to compete through retail politics rather than the costly media-driven campaigns required in larger states.

Regional Groupings Can Foster Increased Voter Participation

The plan is designed to provide a more reasonable timeframe (and calendar) for selecting our presidential nominees by staggering the voting over a period of four months in a logical, yet effective, order. In addition to ensuring that a significant portion of voters across the country will get to participate in the process, it has the added benefit of giving voters a longer look at the candidates and how they perform.

Regional Campaigning Creates Better Campaigns, More Informed Voters

The NASS system can alleviate some of the fundraising pressures that drive candidates out of the competition by providing financial and organizational benefits that come with regional campaigning. By design, the plan also encourages candidates to become well-versed on public policy issues affecting all areas of the U.S.—not just those taking priority in early voting states.

ADOPTION OF THE NASS PLAN

NASS has been working with the two major political parties to proactively adopt a regional primary system. At the conclusion of the 2008 election cycle, both the RNC and the DNC established bodies to review their respective rules processes and make recommendations to improve the process for 2012. Both parties have agreed to encourage a later start date to the process.

For more information on the NASS Rotating Regional Primaries Plan, please visit www.nass.org.