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of Secretaries of State

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Nation's Top State Election Officials Call for Sweeping Reforms to the Presidential Nominating Process

National Association of Secretaries of State plan would rotate regional primaries starting in 2012

(Washington, DC)—Distressed by the number of states rushing to move up their 2008 presidential primary dates, the nation's secretaries of state are calling for nationwide adoption of their reform plan for a rotating regional system. Secretaries of state from 39 states are meeting in Washington, DC this weekend as part of the annual winter meeting of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS). The group is reviewing primary dates for the 2008 nominating cycle and discussing ways to get the states and national parties to agree to changes.

"The 2008 presidential nominating calendar is going to be more frontloaded than ever before," said Massachusetts Secretary of State William Galvin, Co-Chair of the NASS Subcommittee on Presidential Primaries. "Super Tuesday has turned into Super-Sized Tuesday, with the number of states that want to hold primaries in early February more than doubling from the last presidential election cycle. The reality is that most Americans won't have a say in choosing the presidential nominees and those that do will have a few weeks at most to make up their minds."

Galvin will moderate a roundtable on the 2008 presidential nominating calendar on Friday, February 9 from 3:45 PM to 5:00 PM at the Hyatt Regency Washington on Capitol Hill (400 New Jersey Avenue, NW).

The association is hoping to generate support for the NASS Regional Rotating Presidential Primaries Plan. The proposal divides the country into four geographic areas—Eastern, Southern, Midwestern and Western—and rotates each region to vote first beginning in March. The other regions would hold their primary elections in April, May and June. A different part of the country would vote first every sixteen years. New Hampshire and Iowa would retain their early status to allow under-funded and less widely known candidates to compete through retail politics rather than the costly media-driven campaigns required in larger states.

The Carter-Baker Commission on Federal Election Reform, co-chaired by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State James A. Baker III, endorsed the NASS proposal in its September 2005 report.

"Our nonpartisan plan is a major improvement over the free-for-all system that's currently in place," said Kentucky Secretary of State Trey Grayson, Co-Chair of the NASS Subcommittee on Presidential Primaries. "Plus, the 2008 calendar indicates that the states are already moving towards regional primaries in the West, Midwest, South and New England regions. It is time for state and national party leaders to consider the NASS Regional Rotating Presidential Primaries Plan."

To date, at least seventeen states are considering moving up the date of their presidential nominating contests compared to when they held them in 2004.

For more information on the 2007 NASS Winter Conference, including preliminary primary/caucus dates for 2008, visit www.nass.org.

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