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## Isn't There a Better Way to Nominate Presidential Candidates?

Elaine Kamarck  
*The Brookings Institution*

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**ISN'T THERE A BETTER WAY TO NOMINATE  
PRESIDENTIAL CANDIDATES?**

**DR. ELAINE KAMARCK, BROOKINGS MOUNTAIN WEST – 2/13/24**



# GEORGE WASHINGTON...



# THE CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUS 1800 - 1828



220 years ago Americans considering presidential candidates Thomas Jefferson and John Adams were in a now-familiar pickle. (L-R, White House Collection/White House Historical Association; National Portrait Gallery)



# THE NOMINATING CONVENTION 1831



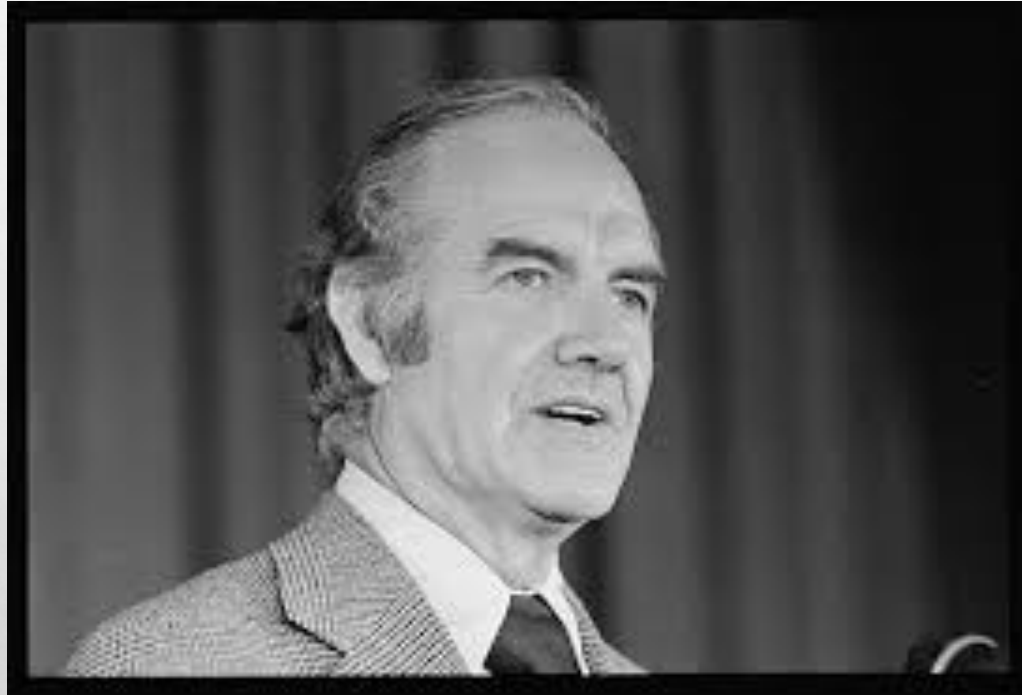
# PARTY BOSSES AND ELECTED OFFICIALS – 1831 TO 1968



# 1968 CHICAGO CONVENTION



# THE MCGOVERN-FRASER COMMISSION





# **SIX KEY RULES THAT TRANSFORMED THE NOMINATING PROCESS**

- **FIRST TIER CAUCUSES MUST BE OPEN TO ANYONE WISHING TO BE KNOWN AS A DEMOCRAT**
- **FIRST TIER CAUCUSES MUST BE HELD SIMULTANEOUSLY THROUGHOUT THE STATE**
- **EVERY PARTICIPANT AT EVERY LEVEL, INCLUDING CANDIDATES FOR DELEGATE MUST DECLARE THEIR PRESIDENTIAL PREFERENCE**
- **BAN ON USE OF THE UNIT RULE**
- **DELEGATES MUST “FAIRLY REFLECT” THE WILL OF THE VOTERS**
- **STATES MUST USE AFFIRMATIVE ACTION IN THE DELEGATE SELECTION PROCESS**
- **THESE CHANGES REFORMED THE REPUBLICAN PARTY AS WELL**

# **CONSEQUENCES FOR THE NOMINATION SYSTEM**

# CONSEQUENCES

- **THE NUMBER OF PRIMARIES INCREASES**
- **ALMOST ALL PRIMARIES BECOME “BINDING”**
- **UNCOMMITTED DELEGATES DISAPPEAR FOR THE MOST PART**
- **THE EARLY STATES INCREASE IN IMPORTANCE BECAUSE OF THE “MOMENTUM” FACTOR**
- **THE SELECTION OF DELEGATES MOVES EARLIER IN THE CONVENTION YEAR -  
”FRONTLOADING”**

# **THE NUMBER OF PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES EXPLODES**

- **PRE-REFORM AVERAGE PER YEAR 1932 – 1968 = 15**
- **POST-REFORM AVERAGE PER YEAR 1972 – 2020 = 30**

# **IS THERE ANOTHER WAY? IS IT BETTER?**

- **A NATIONAL PRIMARY FOR EACH PARTY**
- **REGIONAL PRIMARIES/ROTATING REGIONAL PRIMARIES**
- **PRIMARY DAYS ON WHICH THERE ARE A VARIETY OF TYPES OF STATES: BIG STATES, SMALL STATES, RURAL URBAN , REGIONAL ETC.**
- **ROTATING EARLY PRIMARY STATES**
- **ALLOW FOR PARTY LEADERS AND ELECTED OFFICIALS TO HAVE A GREATER SAY IN THE CHOICE OF A NOMINEE**

# WHO DECIDES?

- **50 STATE DEMOCRATIC PARTIES**
- **50 STATE REPUBLICAN PARTIES**
- **50 STATE LEGISLATURES**
- **THE UNITED STATES CONGRESS**
- **THE SUPREME COURT**

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