

# HOUSE BILL REPORT

## HJM 4025

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**As Reported by House Committee On:**  
State Government & Tribal Affairs

**Brief Description:** Proposing a regional presidential primary.

**Sponsors:** Representatives Appleton, Hunt, Armstrong, Green, Miloscia, Lias and McIntire; by request of Secretary of State.

**Brief History:**

**Committee Activity:**

State Government & Tribal Affairs: 1/22/08, 1/30/08 [DP].

**Brief Summary of Bill**

- Prays to President Bush, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the Senate and Washington's congressional delegation to adopt a rotating regional primary system beginning with the 2012 election.

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### HOUSE COMMITTEE ON STATE GOVERNMENT & TRIBAL AFFAIRS

**Majority Report:** Do pass. Signed by 6 members: Representatives Hunt, Chair; Appleton, Vice Chair; Armstrong, Assistant Ranking Minority Member; Lias, Miloscia and Ormsby.

**Minority Report:** Do not pass. Signed by 2 members: Representatives Chandler, Ranking Minority Member; Kretz.

**Staff:** Tracey Taylor (786-7196).

**Background:**

Each of the major political parties officially nominate their candidate for President at their respective national conventions in the summer before an election. Depending on state law and state party rules, when a voter casts ballots for a candidate in a presidential caucus or primary, they may be actually voting to award delegates bound to vote for a candidate at the state or national convention, or they may simply be expressing an opinion that the state party is not

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bound to follow in selecting delegates. In recent elections, the eventual nominees were well-known well before the actual conventions took place.

Campaigning for President often begins more than a year before the Iowa Caucus, the traditional first delegate selection event, and the New Hampshire primary, which means campaigning begins almost two years before the presidential election. For the 2008 primary season, there were several states that changed their primary election dates in order to come earlier in the election season. In response, both the Republican and Democratic National Committees took steps to penalize the states that moved up their primary dates, stripping them of delegates.

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**Summary of Bill:**

The Legislature prays to President Bush, the Speaker of the United States House of Representatives, the President of the Senate and each member of Washington's congressional delegation to adopt a rotating regional presidential primary system to begin in 2012.

The West region would hold their primary in March, then the Midwest region in April, the South region in May and the East region in June. The rotation would move forward in 2016.

The West region includes Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming, and Guam.

The Midwest region includes Illinois, Indiana, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

The South region includes Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, Puerto Rico, and the Virgin Islands.

The East region includes Connecticut, Delaware, Maine, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island, Vermont, West Virginia, and the District of Columbia.

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**Appropriation:** None.

**Fiscal Note:** Not requested.

**Staff Summary of Public Testimony:**

(In support) With every state vying to be the first, the nomination of candidates for the President of the United States and the selection of convention delegates has become more and more chaotic over the past three decades. In 2004 - 19 states held primaries or caucuses in January and February. This year, 30 states have scheduled their primaries and caucuses in these first two months of the year. As this front-loading has increased, the chances of voter

fatigue increases. This is a terrible way to campaign and a terrible way to choose nominees for the highest office in the nation. The current system is unjustified, unfair, and undemocratic. The regional rotating primary proposal comes from the National Organization of Secretaries of State and is endorsed by the Commission on Federal Election Reform chaired by former President Jimmy Carter and former Secretary of State, James A. Baker, III.

Both the Democratic Party and the Republican Party have agreed to look at reforming the presidential election process. They are considering the regional rotating primary as one of the options. In order to affect the 2012 presidential election, the Republican National Convention must vote on this proposal this summer.

By organizing the dates regionally, it provides a full-month for candidates to be in a region and campaign in the rural areas, as well as the urban. This will give voters an increased first-hand exposure to the candidates. It will also give more meaning to Washington's primary and caucuses.

(Opposed) None.

**Persons Testifying:** Representative Appleton, prime sponsor; Sam Reed, Secretary of State; Megan Moreno, Office of the Secretary of State; and Mike Garvison, Skamania County Auditor.

**Persons Signed In To Testify But Not Testifying:** None.