

# Editorial

## Presidential primary 'reform' would not solve problems

The lead editorial in Monday's Daily Nebraskan ("How do voters spell relief?") addressed the issue of the seemingly endless primary season. The piece insisted the lengthy time preceding party conventions had "made us the laughing stock of the free world."

Given this newspaper's use of the editorial we, I'm not sure whether the "us" referred to in that quote is this country or this paper. Assuming for the moment it refers to the United States, I challenge the assertion that we are being jeered. The current primary system indeed represents the fine-tuning of the American electoral system, not its disintegration.

Recall that much of the current system was devised during a period of massive party reform. Formerly, the pre-convention period was typified by closed-door conventions and political bargaining. Only a few primaries existed, and their impact was insignificant.

Party reform — facilitated in part by closer scrutiny by the news media — changed all that. By the late '70s, primaries had developed into the most important factor in selecting the parties' nominees.

It is generally agreed that this change benefited both the party and the electorate. For the voters, it provided the opportunity to view the candidates at a more immediate level. Candidates from both parties spend more time in, say, Nebraska during the primaries than the general elections.

The new system also gave the eventual nominee the chance to experience first hand the rigors of conducting a long-term campaign. Indeed, after sustaining himself over a period of four months, the 2½-month general election season becomes easily tolerable.

Now, there is growing dissent with the current system. The Monday editorial cited two main complaints: The season is too long, and states like Iowa and New Hampshire are given disproportionate importance.

Addressing the latter problem first, the editorial conceded the futility of its own argument: No matter which alternative is put into place, some state is going to get to be first.

The editorial further claimed the large California primary is trivial because it comes so late in the season. I disagree. Edward Kennedy's California victory in 1980 was a serious blow

indeed to Jimmy Carter's campaign, as was Ronald Reagan's 1976 victory against Gerald Ford. While both incumbents eventually did secure their parties' nominations, the votes cast for their opponents in the California primary were far from trivial.

Additionally, the editorial asserted "Nebraska's small number of delegates are not important by the time mid-May primaries roll around." Nebraska can be judged to be of greater importance during the primary than the general election, if the time spent here by candidates is any indication.

As for the time spent on holding primaries, the editorial exaggerated the situation somewhat. The actual primaries don't start until late February. What we are reading about now are caucuses and pre-convention straw votes. It's the caucuses and conventions, then, that make the process seem so long and pre-determined, not the primaries at all.

The editorial offered the regional primary plan as a solution to this so-called problem. This scheme would divide the country into several regions, and primaries in each region would be the same week.

Rather than solve the malady addressed in the editorial, this alternative would worsen the situation. Take Nebraska as an example. If the state was put in a region comprised of North and South Dakota, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri (not an unreasonable assumption), attention would shift almost exclusively to the latter two (comparatively) large states. Small states, such as Nebraska, might then be forced to switch back to a party caucus or convention system.

In the so-called "good old days," this may have resulted in the hastier selection of a candidate. However, with development of the electronic news media, the result would most likely be an additional emphasis placed on pre-caucuses, conventions and non-binding straw votes. Instead of shortening and simplifying the process, this alternative could easily lengthen and trivialize it.

In short, the regional primary plan is not "reform" at all. Rather it is a throwback to the old system of behind-the-scenes politicking. I maintain this is not progress at all.

—Mike Frost



## Captain Cap's radio program sells political white elephant

SCZSCZSCZSCZ  
 "... and that's the wea ..."  
 SCZSCZSCZ  
 "My baby does the hankie ..."  
 SCZSCZSCZ  
 "This is Captain Cap at station KKYP, your capital city radio connection. Under cloudy skies we've got 45 de-



grees. And hey, we're gonna get your day rollin'! Got some old junk ya' wanna sell? Got some old junk ya' wanna buy? Jus' give us a call.  
 "Good morning, *Capital Call In* ..."  
 "Ya, I've got some Paul Douglas for President sweatshirts. It's a limited edition line. Profits go to the 'PD for president' campaign. You can just stop by our campaign headquarters on 126 N. 11th — the old Commonwealth building. We'll suit ya' up. Thanks."  
 "Thank you. This is *Cap Call In*, You're on the air."  
 "Ya, Captain, I've got some space to sell."  
 "Everybody's got space, fella, what's the id ..."  
 "Not up here at the Nebraska Union.

Everybody's shuffling for space here. But I tell ya, as a janitor, I've found some great room! Clear out some junk and it could even make a women's lounge or something."

"Sounds interesting, where is this space?"

"Southwest corner, first floor of the union — ASUN office. Oughta' make the coming elections easier, too. At least one of the six parties will drop out of the race if they lose a place to keep their books during the school day."

"Thanks, ah, where can people contact you?"

"Under the clock in the South Crib, 11 a.m. every Wednesday. I don't have an office yet."

"OK, thank you and thanks for calling *Capital Call In* ... This is *Cap Call In*, you're on the air."

"Hi, I'm jus' passin' through from Kimball, Nebraska, 'n heard your show."

"Great sir, how can we help you?"

"Yeah, well, we've got some Minuteman missile silos we've been trying to get rid of. They'd make great backyard conversation pieces. Make 'em look pretty by planting mums around 'em. Why, I've heard Kansas City's gonna use one to doll up a city park. You'd be the talk of the neighborhood! The talk of the town!"

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## Campus Quotes

### What do you think of Nebraska's unicameral legislative system?



**Patti Dagerman**  
 Senior Advertising  
 "I think it's good for Nebraska because it's non-partisan. Even though Nebraska interests are diverse, it's not diverse enough to have a two-party system."



**Suzanne Teten**  
 Junior News-Editorial  
 "It's a good system but I think there's too much emphasis on lobbying. I think senators rely too much on lobbyists."



**Eric Page**  
 Senior Geology  
 "It seems to work pretty well. It probably works better than two houses ... it's quicker going through one house. It's easier also."



**Delbert Campbell**  
 Technician Geology Department  
 "Well, I guess they do a fairly good job. I think there's a little confusion. I wish somebody would get that school situation settled up in Plattsmouth."



**Mike Marron**  
 Senior Social Sciences  
 "Since its inception in 1933, when George W. Norris convinced the Legislature that money could be saved by using a one-house senate, I think in general it has been run in an efficient manner."