

# Reforming Our Presidential Primaries: Why Iowa and New Hampshire Voters Should Not Have Special Electoral Powers

By: Abigail Lieber POLSC 292.04  
Scholarly Sources:

## Introduction:

In our current nominating system, Iowa and New Hampshire have the special power of holding the first caucus and primary respectively. Many argue that they should not go first because Iowa and New Hampshire are not racially representative of the country. Others hold that these residents take the vetting process seriously and our nominating system should remain the same. Some reforms include a national primary or having the first four states vote on the same day.

## Discussion of Arguments:

Anderson argues that Iowa should keep its position because of the seriousness of Iowan voters. Although Dee makes a compelling case, he cannot overcome the fact that Iowa's racial makeup is 90% White. Tolbert, Redlawsk, and Bowen explain that there is strong public support for electoral reform. Their research shows that electoral losers, those who do not gain from the current system, are more in favor of reforms like a national primary. Their argument is strong although outdated and they did not ask an important survey question to Iowans in their study. Thomas C. Dee emphasizes the racial makeup of Iowa and New Hampshire. In his article he explores different reforms, their feasibility, and how they could be implemented. Dee makes the most compelling and concise argument.

*An Outsider's Inside View of the Iowa Caucuses*  
by David J. Anderson

- Iowans take their job seriously
- They ask candidates hard-hitting questions and devote their time and energy to the vetting process

*Reforming Presidential Nominations: Rotating State Primaries or a National Primary?*  
by Caroline J. Tolbert, David P. Redlawsk, and Daniel C. Bowen

- They conduct research on electoral winners and electoral losers' opinions on electoral reform

*Disenfranchisement in the US Presidential Nomination Process Through Caucuses and the Gatekeeping Role of Iowa and New Hampshire*  
by Thomas C. Dee

- Explain racial makeup of Iowa and New Hampshire
- Explore the feasibility of a national primary or having the first four states vote on the same day



## Conclusion:

A national primary or having the first four states vote on the same day would be better than our current system. At the moment, Iowa and New Hampshire have special voting privileges despite not being racially diverse. Having a different nominating process would ensure that more diverse voters have a say in our presidential nominees.

# Towards an Inclusive Democracy: Open Primaries and Reform at the State Level

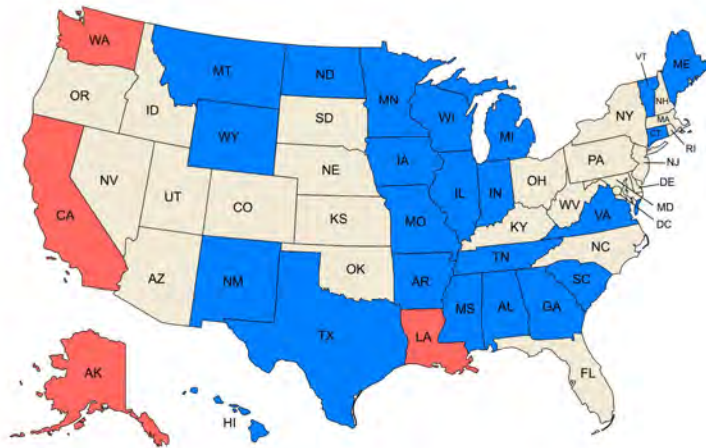
Kate Scotchie

Professor Jaffe

## Introduction

- Many wish for to make elections more inclusive and representative of the nation.
- One possible solution is the introduction of open primaries.
- Open primaries seek to increase access in candidate selection to more voters.
- Concerns remain over how effective open primaries are.
- Do they create more diverse electorates? Are more moderate legislatures elected?

## Different Types of Primaries



- closed
  - participation limited to registered party members.
- open
  - participation open to independents and other party registrations.
- top two
  - all voters and candidates in same primary, top two candidates advance to general.

## Studies in Favor

### A Promise Fulfilled? Open Primaries and Representation

- Open primaries led to a more diverse primary electorate.
- Ideological convergence with greater variety of beliefs.
- Class convergence with greater variety of income levels.
- Increased youth participation across the board.

### Reducing Legislative Polarization: Top-Two and Open Primaries Are Associated with More Moderate Legislators

- Top two open primaries elected more moderate legislators.
- Incumbents facing reelection in top two open primaries moderated their positions.
- This moderating effect held true even when accounting for ideological variance.

## Studies Against

### Open Versus Closed Primaries and the Ideological Composition of Presidential Primary Electorates

- Open primaries did not lead to more moderate primary voters.
- Partisan makeup of voters did not change.
- Ideological beliefs of partisan voters stayed the same.
- Independent voters had similar ideological beliefs to partisans.

### A Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology

- Open primaries did not elect more moderate legislators.
- Median ideology of Republicans and Democrats were unchanged.
- Competitive districts and states with large ideological gap between the parties had a more moderating effect.

## Analysis

- Some studies have shown that primary structure may not be the most decisive factor.
- Competitive districts and political culture led to moderation in legislator ideology.
- We can say that the effectiveness of open primaries may vary state to state.
- California has large ideological polarization and a top two structure that makes everyone participate in the same primary.
- California's laws and culture make open primaries effective.
- However, may also be the case that there is greater ideological and class convergence.

## Conclusion

- It is important to increase electoral access and participation.
- Is necessary to have pragmatic elected officials.
- Less partisan electorate will appoint more moderate legislators.
- Open primaries may offer a path to achieve these goals.
- The goal is the have electorates and officials that reflect the nation as a whole.
- Allowing more people to vote for candidates may be a solution.

## References

- Christian R. Grose (2020). "Reducing Legislative Polarization: Top-Two and Open Primaries Are Associated with More Moderate Legislators." *Journal of Political Institutions and Political Economy*. Vol. 1: No. 2, pp 267-287.
- Kaufmann, K., Gimpel, J., & Hoffman, A. (2003). A Promise Fulfilled? Open Primaries and Representation. *The Journal of Politics*, 65(2), 457-476.
- McHee, E., Maskett, S., Shor, B., Rogers, S., & McCarty, N. (2014). A Primary Cause of Partisanship? Nomination Systems and Legislator Ideology. *American Journal of Political Science*, 58(2), 337-351
- Norrander, Barbara, and Jay Wendland. (2016) "Open Versus Closed Primaries and the Ideological Composition of Presidential Primary Electorates." *Electoral Studies*, vol. 42, Elsevier Ltd., pp. 229-36

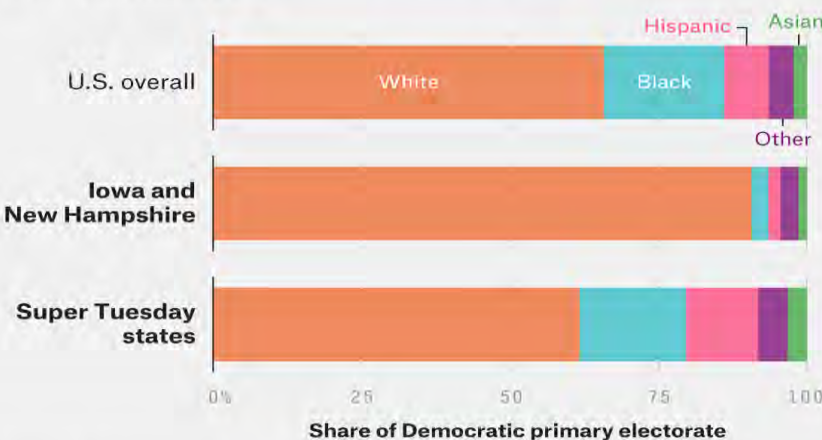
# Presidential Primary Reform by Neil Sharma

## Introduction:

- **Presidential Primaries are complex and evolve.**
- **The order in which state vote in the primaries has been criticized.**
- **Iowa, New Hampshire, Nevada and South Carolina get the most media coverage.**
- **Iowa and New Hampshire are not as diverse as the country.**
- **People want to reform the order.**

### Iowa and N.H. are much whiter than the Democratic Party

Race/ethnicity of the Democratic primary electorate in New Hampshire, Iowa and the 2020 Super Tuesday states vs. Democratic primary voters in the U.S. overall, 2016



Data includes validated voters who voted for a Democratic candidate in their 2016 primary or caucus.

## Thesis:

Due to the complex nature of primaries and politics, there is no clear solution for improving this system without significant flaws.

## Pros:

- **Iowa allows less popular and wealthy candidates to make a name for themselves.**
- **Allows for more grassroots campaign and getting to know voters.**
- **Sequential primaries allow voters in states that vote in March and April to have more info.**

## Cons:

- **Lack of diversity.**
- **Early states get all the attention and coverage.**
- **Early state voters have less info.**
- **Late state voters may not impact race.**

## Potential Solutions:

- **Switching to a national primary where all states vote on the same day.**
  - **Would solve diversity problem.**
  - **Would result in well-known and wealthy candidates having an advantage.**
- **Voter Turnout Initiative, where states would be ordered based on the turnout % of the last presidential election.**
  - **Incentivizes increased voting turnout in elections.**
  - **Unclear how this would affect grassroots campaigning and if richer and well-known candidates would benefit.**
  - **Allows for states to control where they vote in a primary.**

## Conclusion:

- **There is no perfect solution.**
- **This must become a nationalized topic, and people must come to a nonpartisan solution.**
- **There are things that would be lost if a new system were to be adopted.**
- **The political process must be made easier for people to understand.**