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**CLIFF-HANGERS**  
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- AUTHORITARIANISM AND NATIONALISM
- DEMOCRACY THEORIES
- FAILED STABILITY

## Cliff-hangers

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# US PRESIDENTIAL PRIMARIES: REALLY DEMOCRATIC OR A DE FACTO CLIFFHANGER?

Vladyslav Faraponov  
Internews Ukraine

*The most recent presidential elections in the United States were very close ones, and raising many questions regarding the process, proved that the system needs to be revised. Given the fact that US citizens do not directly elect their presidential candidates from both major parties, this article considers the primaries' schedule as an influential factor that shapes the final choice. The system as a whole receives much criticism every four years due to being archaic and not having direct representation of the US population overall. At the same time, the existing scholars' analysis mainly focuses on various aspects of the US presidential system and usually does not consider the primaries' calendar. Thus, the article examines whether the entire presidential nomination system can be called a cliff-hanger.*

## Introduction

The existing presidential nomination system has been criticised for at least the past 30 years, particularly after the 2000 and 2020 elections when the Supreme Court was involved, and the US Capitol attack occurred following last year's election, respectively. In this paper, the presidential system will be called 'primaries' or 'presidential primaries' for the sake of the simplification of terms. In fact, the current system offers two ways for the parties to decide which candidate suits their constituents most: primaries and caucuses.

Primary elections are conducted in order for the party to choose which candidate has the best chance to beat his/her opponents

from the other party. At the same time, as the BBC mentioned, there were only four states in 2020 in which the Democrats held this type of the selection process: Nevada, North Dakota, Wyoming and Iowa. On the contrary, the Republican party held caucuses only in Guam, the Northern Marianas, American Samoa, and the Virgin Islands<sup>1</sup>. Thus, the tendency is clear to exclude caucuses, and it is possible that primaries may dominate in all states in the 2024 or 2028 presidential elections. It is essential to mention that this paper considers neither state nor local elections, nor will it examine elections to the Senate or the House of Representatives, and will focus on the ways the Republican and Democratic parties select their candidates to run for the White House.

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1 US election 2020: What are primaries and caucuses and how do they work? "BBC". 5 March 2020 [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-51273719].

## Which States Are the First to Determine the Final Presidential Rivals?

The US presidential primaries look like the presidential elections in modern democracies, where voters directly cast their ballots for candidates of their choice. It should be said that the first US primary in today's understanding of the word occurred in 1912. However, the current schedule of primary contests has been formed in the next 55 years.<sup>2</sup> At the same time, as Donovan and Hunsaker summarized, the presidential contests may be affected by the preferences for candidates. They argue that the voter's choice is driven by expectations of how well a candidate may perform in the campaign, which means if he/she can at least win the nomination within the party.<sup>3</sup> They claim that the recent polling numbers, media attention, and history of electoral campaigns may determine the candidates' support. This implies that the voters would be less likely to cast their votes for candidates who lost several primary elections in a row and have only potential chances to be nominated.

Speaking of the primaries calendar, it is necessary to mention that both major political parties are free to set up their own schedule of primaries and caucuses<sup>4</sup>, which is why the Republican presidential primaries differ from the Democratic ones. However, the first two states have dominated the early exchanges

since the mid-1970s, namely Iowa with its caucuses and New Hampshire with a primary. Both states have a long history of going first. Roughly speaking, holding the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primaries have become a habit both for Republicans and Democrats since 1976.<sup>5,6</sup> The discussion of this "random" choice has been on the agenda for a long time, and it has become deeper and more damaging recently due to the fact that Iowa state is "not diverse" enough to be the first state to vote for the potential president. According to the 2020 census, Iowa is one of the US' least diverse states. More than 84% population identify themselves as white, and data from only five states exceed this number, while the national average is just above 60%.<sup>7</sup> However, the counterargument to this claim would be data that proved that the voter turnout at the Iowa caucuses reaches almost only 20% of eligible voters, hinting at the fact that having the vast majority population of any group within the particular state cannot be said to have a notable effect.<sup>8</sup> If Iowa caucuses become a bipartisan tradition, New Hampshire accompanied it by being the first national primary election for parties from both sides of the aisle.

## Does the Primaries' Order Really Make A Difference?

In order to elaborate on a hypothesis made earlier, I choose to analyse the results of the first four states where primaries occurred,

- 2 *Is Our Primary System Broken?* "FiveThirtyEight", 3 June 2021 [https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/is-our-primary-system-broken/].
- 3 T Donovan, & R. Hunsaker, *Beyond Expectations: Effects of Early Elections in U.S. Presidential Nomination Contests*. "Political Science and Politics", 2009, 42(1), 45–52. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/20452372].
- 4 Haskell, J. *Reforming Presidential Primaries: Three Steps for Improving the Campaign Environment*. "Presidential Studies Quarterly", 1996, 26(2), 380–390. [http://www.jstor.org/stable/27551585].
- 5 S. Sanders, *Why Does Iowa Vote First, Anyway?*, "National Public Radio", 29 January 2016, [https://www.npr.org/2016/01/29/464804185/why-does-iowa-vote-first-anyway].
- 6 Stahl, J. *Why Iowa and New Hampshire go first*. "The National Constitution Center". 29 January 2016. [https://constitutioncenter.org/blog/why-iowa-and-new-hampshire-go-first].
- 7 Kauffman, C. *Iowa remains a less diverse state, as two-thirds of its counties lose population*. "Times-Republican", 13 August 2021. [https://www.timesrepublican.com/news/todays-news/2021/08/iowa-remains-a-less-diverse-state-as-two-thirds-of-its-counties-lose-population/].
- 8 Sanders. S., n.4.

as well as the so-called “Super Tuesday” in every primary election since 1976, when the longest-living President in US history Jimmy Carter won the Democratic nomination, which then paved the way to the White House.



***Carter’s nomination proved that he would have been less likely to succeed in the primaries without demonstrating good spirits at the beginning of the campaign. Thus, the 1976 Democratic primary served the party as a cliff-hanger and helped them win the presidency as well***

I identify the scope of the 44 years prior to the 2020 campaign, considering every “game-changing election”, which means that the elections that brought second terms for the president-in-office then will not be analysed, as the incumbent President has never lost a party nomination in the history of US presidential bids. First of all, the available data is sufficient to make the major argument and as stated earlier, the current system of primaries was formed in the 1970s, making the 1976 Democratic and Republican primaries the first ones when Iowans went to the polls first. Moreover, during those 44 years, as mentioned earlier, the Republican and Democratic administrations entered the White House the same number of times: Carter and Biden as one-term Presidents (at least for now regarding Biden), as well as both the Obama and Clinton administrations

having been re-elected. On the Republican side: Trump and George H. W. Bush won the electoral college one time, and Reagan and George W. Bush managed to do it twice. Thus, six presidential terms each from both sides of the aisle, making 12 in total, 8 of which would matter the most.

### **Echoes of the Past Still Helpful to Gain Momentum**

Jimmy Carter entered the 1976 Democratic primary election with low polling numbers, and he was not considered a potential frontrunner. Despite having been in the Democratic establishment for decades, his national recognition left much to be desired. Besides, 17 of his Democratic colleagues entered the race as well, a number that was overtaken by Democrats only in the 2020 campaign. On the contrary, the Republicans’ image was badly damaged due to the Watergate scandal, which occurred in 1972, and the Vietnam War<sup>9</sup>. What is more, political scientists then emphasized that when Carter had left the governorship of Georgia in 1975, he had no political base, was not visible in the polls, and had little money to finance his bid.<sup>10</sup> Besides, in early 1975, Carter came last with only 1% of support in a Gallup poll among democrats<sup>11</sup>.

At the same time, according to the newly established rules and a record number of primaries then, Carter realized that his wisest strategy would be to campaign in each state. He was an unpopular candidate; thus, his decision to attempt to win states where he might not finish first served his plan.<sup>12</sup> He had won the Iowa caucuses

9 Carter Credibility Issue: Galley and Vietnam War. “New York Times”, 21 May 1976 [https://www.nytimes.com/1976/05/21/archives/carter-credibility-issue-galley-and-vietnam-war.html].  
10 Britannica, T. Editors of Encyclopaedia, *United States presidential election of 1976*. “Encyclopedia Britannica”, 26 October 2021. [https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-1976].  
11 S. L. Popkin, *The Reasoning Voter: Communication and Persuasion in Presidential Campaigns*, University of Chicago Press, 2020 [https://www.degruyter.com/document/doi/10.7208/9780226772875-009/html].  
12 Britannica, T, n.10

and the New Hampshire primary<sup>13</sup>, thus receiving more and more delegates' votes. Such an adjustment and early electoral success paved the way to the nomination. Winning in 9 states out of the first 15, he gained momentum and led in 19 states overall by receiving more than 52.29% of the pledged delegates' votes at the National Convention and winning the nomination.<sup>14</sup> Hence, Carter's nomination proved that he would have been less likely to succeed in the primaries without demonstrating good spirits at the beginning of the campaign. Thus, the 1976 Democratic primary served the party as a cliff-hanger and helped them win the presidency as well. Carter's biographers have pointed out that his success was mostly determined in Iowa's caucuses. No one took Iowa seriously. Most candidates did not even go there. At the same time, Carter said, "If I win there, I could use that as a way to build momentum". He went door-to-door, went to every dinner, slept in the homes of Iowan supporters. That was his understanding that the process had changed.<sup>15</sup>

It is important to note that both parties did not take part in the so-called Super Tuesday back then, as it was introduced later. Generally, this is a day when the vast majority of delegates' votes can be assigned. As noted by the New York Times, it is the

closest thing to a national primary. For example, 1,357 delegates were at stake in the 2020 Democratic primary, accumulating a third of the overall votes.<sup>16</sup>

### **National Polling Matters, But Is Not an Inclusive Reason for Candidates' Performance**

Ronald Reagan won the general election twice: in 1980 and 1984. What is more, he was also very close to being nominated in 1968 and 1976, losing by only a slight margin to Nixon and Ford, respectively<sup>17</sup>. Former CIA Director Herbert Walker Bush and former California governor Ronald Reagan entered the 1980 Republican primary contest as the most experienced and well-recognized candidates among the other five opponents<sup>18</sup>. Bush won the Iowa caucuses, while Reagan was more favourable for conservatives in New Hampshire.<sup>19</sup>

It is interesting that Reagan and Bush polled equally, accumulating 32% each according to Gallup polls, conducted following the Iowa caucuses on January 25-28. However, after his New Hampshire victory, Reagan maintained the lead with 55%, while Bush trailed at only 35% in a poll conducted on 29 February – 3 March, 1980<sup>20</sup>. Following Reagan's win in New Hampshire by almost 17% compared to Bush, no Republican

13 *Carter and Udall Lead as Delegates Are Picked in Iowa*, "New York Times", 11 April 1976 [https://www.nytimes.com/1976/04/11/archives/carter-and-udall-lead-as-delegates-are-picked-in-iowa.html]

14 R.A. Strong (n.d.). *Jimmy Carter: campaigns and elections*. "Miller Center". [https://millercenter.org/president/carter/campaigns-and-elections.].

15 O. B. Waxman, *What the 2020 Democrats can learn from one of the most crowded primary fields in history*, "Time", 27 June 2019 [https://time.com/5607309/democratic-primaries-with-most-candidates/].

16 M. Stevens, *When Is Super Tuesday and What Is It Exactly?*, "New York Times", 27 February 2020, [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/27/us/politics/super-tuesday.html].

17 L. Cannon, *Ronald Reagan: campaigns and elections*, "Miller Center", [https://millercenter.org/president/reagan/campaigns-and-elections ].

18 *ibid*

19 J. Perlez, *Reporters' notebook; Bush's Humphrey' factor*, "New York Times", 8 March 1987, [https://www.nytimes.com/1987/03/08/us/reporter-s-notebook-bush-s-humphrey-factor.html]

20 J. M. Jones, *Iowa, New Hampshire Results Often Shift National Preferences*, "Gallup", 3 January 2008 [https://news.gallup.com/poll/103537/iowa-new-hampshire-results-often-shift-national-preferences.aspx]

managed to challenge him. What is more, according to the CBS news/ New York Times poll, Reagan's popularity started to grow and then led to his then record-breaking general election results.<sup>21</sup> That said, the New Hampshire primary served as a trigger to Republicans coalescing around Reagan by May 1980<sup>22</sup>. Thus, the first primary determined the further campaign one more time, hinting at another cliff-hanger presidential nomination.

After losing the 1980 Republican nomination, H. W. Bush was chosen as vice-president and served two terms in the Reagan administration. Bush was the one who invented "the "Big Mo" to describe the momentum that victory in the Iowa caucuses gave his campaign in 1980<sup>23</sup>. George Bush's second primaries in 1988 were more successful than the 1980 contest. He overcame a fourth-place finish in the Iowa caucus, but gained the lead in the New Hampshire primary<sup>24</sup>. However, Bush's polling rate was far from being optimistic for him.

A Gallup poll of New Hampshire residents before the primary elections suggested that 36% were favouring Senator Dole, with Bush supported by only 28%. The third rival was trailing at 12%; thus, the race was close between two GOP candidates.<sup>25</sup> At the

same time, according to various CBS News/ New York Times National Polls, Bush's numbers had not been so low. However, the majority of polls suggested that Dole was the frontrunner before the New Hampshire primaries.<sup>26</sup> Their results indicate, of course, that it is not necessary to win both the Iowa caucuses and the New Hampshire primary, as Bush did. He was able to secure a credible finish, supported his viability, and his national polling numbers went up as well.<sup>27</sup>

Super Tuesday was high time for Bush to prove his ability to prolong the momentum and get a substantial lead. Bush won 16 out of 17 Republican contests by receiving the 501 delegates' votes out of the 891 that were at stake on March 8, 1988, which means he secured more than 56% of all Super Tuesday's conservative delegates. However, before Super Tuesday, Bush and Dole were level pegging when it came to their share of national delegates. The 1988 Republican Super Tuesday brought Bush 74%, while Dole was left with only 17%.<sup>28</sup>

Bill Clinton had been polling first since 1991, far before the primary season started. However, the 1992 campaign was unique. The Democrats decided not to hold the Iowa caucuses first due to the fact that Iowa Senator T. Harkin was running; hence, it was not wise spending time there for his

21 S. L. Popkin, n.11

22 A. Nagourney, *George Bush, Who Steered Nation in Tumultuous Times, Is Dead at 94*, "New York Times", 30 November, 2018 [<https://www.nytimes.com/2018/11/30/us/politics/george-hw-bush-dies.html>]

23 J. Perlez, n.19

24 K. E. John, *A Report: 1980-1988 New Hampshire Presidential Primary Polls*. "The Public Opinion Quarterly", 53(4), 590-605. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749360>].

25 *Politics 88: Dole Tops Bush in Gallup Poll; Dukakis Leads*, "LA Times", 15 February 1988 [<https://www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-1988-02-15-mn-28994-story.html>].

26 L.M. Bartels & C.A. Broh. *A Review: The 1988 Presidential Primaries*. "The Public Opinion Quarterly", 1989, 53(4), 563-589. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/2749359>].

27 R. E. Adkins & A. J. Dowdle. *How Important Are Iowa and New Hampshire to Winning Post-Reform Presidential Nominations?* "Political Research Quarterly", 2001, 54(2), 431-444. [<https://doi.org/10.2307/449165>].

28 C. D. Hadley & H. W. Stanley, *Super Tuesday 1988: Regional Results and National Implications*. "Publius", 1989, 19(3), 19-37. [<https://doi.org/10.2307/3330481>].




contenders. Clinton entered the race in New Hampshire and came second,<sup>29</sup> although there is a substantial difference in obtaining 25%, which was a “comfortable second or perceive the total loss”. Clinton’s 25% was 8% behind Paul Tsongas that year.<sup>30</sup> Clinton’s momentum grew at Super Tuesday 1992, when he won eight out of 11 states polling on one day<sup>31</sup>. Thus, the 1992 elections were the first when the New Hampshire primary did not point out the future nominee due to not being the first contest.

As the 2000 Republican primary polls suggested, that George W. Bush maintained his lead since the pollsters considered him to be running for office, the 2000 Republican nomination was not a cliff-hanger.<sup>32</sup> However, the 2000 general presidential election was a real one due to events in Florida, and then the federal Supreme courts’ involvement and vote recount.<sup>33</sup>

Barack Obama’s 2008 Democratic primaries were a cliff-hanger from the very beginning. He had demonstrated better polling figures than Hilary Clinton in less than 10% of national polls before January 2008<sup>34</sup>, which hinted at his outsider’s position. However, he had won the Iowa caucuses, which tied him up with Clinton. In mid-December, 2007, Obama had only 27%, while Clinton got 45%

of national support according to the Gallup poll, as the most credible polling agency. Having said this, Gallup can be called into question by mistakenly predicting only the Trump-Clinton 2016 election and Truman-Dewey 1948 contest.

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***Barack Obama’s 2008 Democratic primaries were a cliff-hanger from the very beginning. He had demonstrated better polling figures than Hilary Clinton in less than 10% of national polls before January 2008, which hinted at his outsider’s position***

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However, the Iowa contest was a real cliff-hanger for Obama’s campaign. By early January of 2008, he had already obtained 33%, which was equal to Clinton’s loss of 12%.<sup>35</sup> Later on, Obama did lose only 2% at the New Hampshire primary out of the first six states<sup>36</sup>. What is more, regardless of the upcoming Super Tuesday, Obama secured the lead before the Nevada caucuses and the South Carolina primary<sup>37</sup>, which made him already the front-runner prior to Super Tuesday, where he won 12 out

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29 J. M. Jones, n.20

30 T. Donovan, & R. Hunsaker, n.3

31 M. Levy, *United States presidential election of 1992*. “Encyclopedia Britannica”. 27 October 2021 [https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-1992].

32 F. Newport. *Bush Continues to Dominate Republican Field in 2000 Election*, “Gallup”, 30 June 1999 [https://news.gallup.com/poll/3751/bush-continues-dominate-republican-field-2000-election.aspx].

33 L. Kennedy, *How the 2000 Election Came Down to a Supreme Court Decision*. “History”, 24 September 2020 [https://www.history.com/news/2000-election-bush-gore-votes-supreme-court].

34 *Democratic Primary Preview: Iowa, New Hampshire, South Carolina*, Pew Research Center, 3 December 2007 [https://www.pewresearch.org/politics/2007/12/03/democratic-primary-preview-iowa-new-hampshire-south-carolina/].

35 F. Newport. *Huckabee, Obama Gain at National Level*, “Gallup”, 7 January 2008 [https://news.gallup.com/poll/103615/Huckabee-Obama-Gain-National-Level.aspx].

36 *United States presidential election of 2008, primary results*, “Encyclopedia Britannica”. [https://www.britannica.com/event/United-States-presidential-election-of-2008/Primary-Results].

37 CNN 2008 election center, 2008 [http://edition.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/states/nevada.html].

of 23 states. All in all, Obama managed to clinch the nomination and received the 2,118 delegates needed to triumph at the party's convention<sup>38</sup>.

The 2016 election was a cliff-hanger, when it comes to both the general elections and the Republican primaries. The Clinton-Trump 2016 head-to-head presidential polls (September-October 2016) showed that the former first lady would easily win the White House. However, this never happened. When it came to the Republican primaries, Donald Trump entered the race trailing up to 10 points behind Clinton. Furthermore, Trump was polling much behind the major contenders within the party, namely Lindsey Graham<sup>39</sup>. The Iowa caucuses brought a narrow lead for Trump's major opponent, Senator Ted Cruz<sup>40</sup>. Trump achieved less than 3%, but managed to win three out of the other four primary contests. It should be stressed that Trump had won New Hampshire by 24%, South Carolina by 10% and Nevada by a much larger lead, 24%. Then Trump triumphed on Super Tuesday by winning 7 out of 11 states and receiving almost half of the needed number of pledged

delegates<sup>41</sup>. Later on, Trump's rate in the primaries had risen up to 50% nationally, and he paved the way to becoming the nominee<sup>42</sup>.

## History and the Primary Calendar Matter

The incumbent US President Joe Biden entered the Democratic primary not as a clear frontrunner, just as had many of the nominees mentioned earlier. He was the most experienced and recognisable candidate, for certain. Speaking of Iowa's campaign, Biden could have performed better, as he finished only fourth in that tight race<sup>43</sup>. What is more, he did not receive any pledged delegate's votes in New Hampshire<sup>44</sup>. His performance in Nevada left much to be desired. However, he gained momentum in South Carolina by obtaining almost half of the state's available delegates' votes<sup>45</sup>. It could be argued that this happened due to the endorsement he received from Jim Clyburn, the highest-ranking African American Democrat in Congress<sup>46</sup>. For Biden, it was a real firewall, which continued his momentum till Super Tuesday. A total of 14 states were at stake on

38 J. Zeleny, *Obama Clinches Nomination; First Black Candidate to Lead a Major Party Ticket*, "New York Times", 4 June 2008, [https://www.nytimes.com/2008/06/04/us/politics/04elect.html]

39 C. Bialik, *How The Republican Field Dwindled from 17 To Donald Trump*, "FiveThirtyEight", 5 May 2016, [https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-the-republican-field-dwindled-from-17-to-donald-trump/].

40 *2016 Republican primaries, Iowa*, "CNN", 15 May 2016, [https://edition.cnn.com/election/2016/primaries/states/ia/Rep].

41 Super Tuesday Results 2016, "New York Times", September 2016, [https://www.nytimes.com/elections/2016/results/2016-03-01].

42 H. Hartig, J. Lapinski and S. Psylos, *Poll: Trump Reaches 50 Percent Support Nationally for the First Time*, "NBC News" 26 April 2016 [https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/2016-election/poll-trump-reaches-50-percent-support-nationally-first-time-n5620611].

43 *Iowa Caucus Results 2020*, "New York Times", 29 February 2020 [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/02/04/us/elections/results-iowa-caucus.html]

44 *Democratic Delegate Count and Primary Election Results 2020*, "New York Times", September 2020 [https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2020/us/elections/delegate-count-primary-results.html]

45 S. Peoples, M. Kinnard, B. Barrow, *Biden wins South Carolina, aims for Super Tuesday momentum*, "AP", 29 February 2020 [https://apnews.com/article/elections-in-state-wire-election-2020-ma-state-wire-joe-biden-b9872b58b495fd17044f359338ab3f2a].

46 D. Strauss, *A chain reaction: how one endorsement set Joe Biden's surge in motion*, "The Guardian", 4 March 2020 [https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2020/mar/04/joe-biden-jim-clyburn-endorsement-super-tuesday].

the 2020 Super Tuesday, and Biden got 10 of them, while his major rival Bernie Sanders managed to win only four, which meant that Biden obtained 458 delegates out of the 1,344 which were at stake. All in all, Biden cleared the way to becoming the nominee.



***the primaries' schedule was one of the key factors that determined each of the campaigns discussed. However, seven out of the selected nominations proved that candidates need to start well in the very first primaries, as voters will instead support those who still have a chance to win the contest. In other words, voters want their voice to be heard and not wasted***

As voting choice and campaign performance are beyond the scope of the article, it could be summarized that the primaries' schedule was one of the key factors that determined each of the campaigns discussed. However, seven out of the selected nominations proved that candidates need to start well in the very first primaries, as voters will instead support those who still have a chance to win the contest. In other words, voters want their voice to be heard and not wasted. At the same time, as history shows, some dramatic victories or losses could make candidates exit the race. For example, Harry S. Truman sought re-election in 1952 after serving his first full term as President following the 1948 elections. However, after

losing the New Hampshire primary, which was the first at that time, he decided to exit the race<sup>47</sup>.

### **How should The Cliff-Hanger Primary System Be Revised?**

The article proves that the Iowa and New Hampshire caucuses and primaries, respectively, remain major milestones in the race to secure the parties' nominations.<sup>48</sup> The examples chosen from both Republican and Democratic primaries prove that they defined candidates' performance in early voting states, such as has been the norm in voting arrangements since the 1970s. Besides, in the aftermath, no candidate who won the nomination, lost three out of the four first states in the primaries, with the exception of Joe Biden.

There is no doubt that the existing system of primaries should be changed at some point. While the first states, including the Super Tuesday contests, received much media and campaign attention from both parties, states that conduct primaries later are largely unnoticed. Another aspect that may need changing is the primary counting method. There is an ongoing discourse that instant-runoff voting, known as ranked-choice voting, could be implemented<sup>49</sup>. This system may solve the problem when candidates campaign on similar issues equally, or a voter does not have a solid and clear preference; thus, he/she may rank his/her choice by assigning respective numbers in front of candidates' names. It should be said that in the 2020 Democratic primaries, Wyoming, Alaska, Hawaii and Kansas used

47 Waxman, O. B. *Could Trump Lose the Republican Nomination? Here's the History of Primary Challenges to Incumbent Presidents*. "Time". 10 October 2019. [https://time.com/5682760/incumbent-presidents-primary-challenges/]

48 R. E. Adkins & A. J. Dowdle, n. 27

49 *The Primaries Are Just Dumb*. "New York Times". 15 November 2021, [https://www.nytimes.com/2020/02/26/opinion/democrats-primary-south-carolina.html].

this system. The early voting in the Nevada caucuses took place according to such a model as well. At the same time, the fact that various states have different legislature on this issue also plays an important role when it comes to amending the current winner-take-all or the plurality system<sup>50</sup>.



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The paradox of the current system is that Iowa and New Hampshire, as the first national primaries got much more attention while being less diverse than other states,

which hints at their unique role and power in determining the nomination<sup>51</sup>. Despite the apparent effect of the first primaries on the nomination process, it is less likely that the system will be changed in the short-term perspective. The problem is that both major parties have been campaigning for almost five decades within the system, and they have got used to it as it serves their purposes. In addition, there is no bipartisan discussion on the need to amend the system, which from time to time is beneficial to both major parties.

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50 S. Bokart-Lindell, *Can Ranked-Choice Voting Cure American Politics?*, “New York Times”, 24 June 2021 [https://www.nytimes.com/2021/06/24/opinion/ranked-choice-new-york.html ]

51 *The Primaries Are Just Dumb*. “New York Times”, n.49

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