

the beginning of the 21st century. Rather than focusing solely on the 2008 nomination battles in Chapter 2, my aim was to show the recurring patterns in the 2000–2008 quests for both parties' presidential slots. Chapter 3 investigates biases in voting rules, caucuses, delegate allocation and distribution, superdelegates, and the front-loaded nomination calendar. This chapter, in particular, was informed by the existing research in political science. The numerous reform proposals became the topic for Chapter 4. The book closes out with a reminder of how oddities, biases, and strengths are found in a number of electoral settings as well as in presidential nomination politics.

For students reading this book, I hope to make them better consumers of the depictions of the politics of recent and future presidential nominations. To do so, I want to give students a bit of historical perspective. I also wish to introduce students to a bit of empirical research to demonstrate how questions of biases can be scientifically addressed. New reforms for presidential nomination procedures are frequently debated, and I want students to be able to see the advantages, disadvantages, and potential for unintended consequences in such proposals. Finally, I want to leave students with the message that electoral politics is an area of unique events unfolding within structures that provide both continuity and change in procedures and outcomes.

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Happenstance and Reforms

Barbara Norrander,
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In July 2007, John McCain's campaign coffers were nearly empty. McCain's second try for the Republican presidential nomination was not going as planned. After spending \$24 million in early 2007 trying to project an air of inevitability for winning the nomination, McCain's fundraising had been less than expected and he had fallen behind former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani in the national public opinion polls by 15 percentage points.¹ Though McCain had strong foreign policy credentials, some factions of the Republican Party continued to distrust McCain due to his positions on immigration and campaign finance reform. To restart his campaign, McCain fired most of his staff and went back to the tactic that had seemed to work in 2000. He got on a bus and began his cross-country "No Surrender Tour." McCain emphasized his support for a surge of troops in the Iraq War and gradually the crowds at his rallies began to increase.

McCain also bet that none of his competitors would be able to unite the Republican Party. While Giuliani led in the opinion polls, his positions on social issues would be too liberal for many traditional Republicans. Mitt Romney, the former governor of Massachusetts, had raised the most campaign funds, and as a successful business leader he had strong credentials for economic policies. Yet, Romney was often wooden on the campaign trail, and he was accused of flip-flopping on social issues because he had switched to a more conservative position on abortion. Former Arkansas governor Mike Huckabee was consolidating the party's religious conservatives behind him, but would he be able to expand beyond this base to incorporate the party's economic and foreign policy conservatives? Fred Thompson might have a chance to unite these factions, but he appeared to be a reluctant campaigner.

On the Democratic side in July 2007, New York senator Hillary Rodham Clinton was clearly in command. She had secured the support of many of the party's elite, she raised large sums of money, and the media and her opponents treated her as the frontrunner. Other senior senators, such as Chris Dodd and Joe Biden, were unable to keep up in fundraising totals or

in the national polls. John Edwards, in his second try for the presidential nomination, also lagged behind Clinton. Each of these candidates would need an early primary or caucus victory or a major mistake by Clinton to have a realistic chance at winning the nomination. Illinois senator Barack Obama had been on the national stage for only four years, being introduced to the national audience with his keynote address at the 2004 Democratic convention and being elected to the U.S. Senate in 2006. Could he compete with Clinton? Obama was almost as successful as Clinton in raising campaign funds and his rallies drew large crowds, but he was awkward in the early debates, some of the party's elite were wary of supporting such an untested candidate, and the general public too seemed unimpressed as Obama trailed Clinton in the national polls by 20 percentage points.²

Results from the early caucuses and primaries would set the tone for both parties' 2008 nomination contests. On the Republican side, Huckabee won the opening round in Iowa, with the support of the large number of religious conservatives in the Iowa Republican Party. Romney finished a disappointing second, given the amount of money he spent campaigning in Iowa. McCain won in New Hampshire, as he had done in 2000. This time, McCain was able to follow up with crucial victories in the South Carolina and Florida primaries. McCain was now the frontrunner. Next came February 5, Super Duper Tuesday, when nearly half of the states would hold their primaries or caucuses. McCain won two-thirds of the Super Duper Tuesday primaries and became the Republican Party's presumptive nominee.

In March 2008, McCain accumulated the final number of convention delegates, half of the total, necessary to be guaranteed the Republican Party's presidential nomination. McCain earned the support of these delegates by winning 33 of the 41 Republican primary elections and 6 of the 17 caucuses. (The number of primaries and caucuses adds up to more than 50 because a few states held both a primary and a caucus, plus Washington, DC, Puerto Rico, and U.S. territories, such as Guam, also participate with caucuses or primaries.) More importantly, as McCain increasingly won more of the presidential primaries throughout January and early February, one-by-one his competitors for the nomination dropped out of the race. Fred Thompson and Rudy Giuliani left in January. Mitt Romney exited the contest after Super Duper Tuesday. When McCain accumulated the last of the delegates needed for the nomination in the first week of March, his last serious challenger, Mike Huckabee, also withdrew from the race.

The only remaining question was who would be McCain's running mate, and he announced his choice of Alaska governor Sarah Palin on August 29, three days before the Republican Party convention would open in St. Paul, Minnesota. The goal of the Republican convention was

to rally the party behind its presidential ticket. Palin galvanized the party's base with her convention speech emphasizing her background as a small town mayor and a hockey mom while attacking the Democratic ticket and the Washington establishment. On the final day of the Republican convention, McCain gave his acceptance speech before 2,380 Republican delegates and a national and international television, radio, and internet audience. In his speech, McCain promised he would fight for the rights, prosperity, and security of America.

The 2008 Democratic nomination opened with an unexpected upset of Clinton in the Iowa caucuses. Obama more successfully mobilized his supporters to turn out for these two-hour Thursday night meetings. Clinton came back with a dramatic win in New Hampshire. The two candidates split the next two contests in Nevada and South Carolina. On Super Duper Tuesday, Clinton and Obama again split the states. Clinton originally planned to secure the nomination with victories on Super Duper Tuesday and did not have a strategy for a long campaign. Obama knew he needed to gather every possible delegate if he was going to upset Clinton, and his delegate totals inched above Clinton's with victories in caucuses and primaries held later in February. Yet, Clinton came back with important victories in states such as Ohio and Pennsylvania. The Democratic nomination battle continued until the last two primaries held on June 3, when Obama secured the necessary delegate total for winning the Democratic nomination. Senator Clinton conceded the nomination to Senator Obama at a speech before her supporters on June 7.

Many speculated whether the bitter battle between Obama and Clinton would harm the party's fortunes in the fall election. Yet, Senator Clinton and former president Bill Clinton both endorsed Obama, helped with his campaign during the summer, and gave hearty endorsement speeches at the Democratic convention. At the convention, the roll call of states, which announces the delegate support for each candidate, was orchestrated to halt at New York, where Senator Clinton asked the convention to nominate Obama by acclamation. A quick voice vote approved the motion. The following evening, in a session moved to Denver's professional football stadium, Obama's acceptance speech echoed the themes of his primary campaign: "Change We Can Believe In."

Modern presidential nominations are secured by winning the support of the American electorate in primaries and caucuses. But the process is twofold. At one level it is a national contest between the competing candidates. Every candidate wants to win as many primaries as possible, and in particular, wants to win in the early primaries and caucuses. Doing well in these early events gives a candidate the reputation and resources to compete in subsequent primaries. Doing poorly in the early primaries often leads candidates to withdraw from the contest. In most cases in recent years, all but one candidate has withdrawn from the nomination

contest before all of the primaries are held. This one remaining candidate becomes the party's presumptive nominee.

The second level of the twofold process is the legal component. In two-thirds of the states the public's vote in a presidential primary is linked to the selection of delegates who will represent the state at the party's national convention. In the remaining states, the public participates in neighborhood caucuses, which are open party meetings, where they select some attendees to be delegates to higher level conventions and eventually the national convention. It is the votes of these delegates at the two parties' national conventions that officially name the nominees. While technically selected from each state, today these delegates are strongly committed, and in some instances legally bound, to support a particular candidate. Thus, the convention vote can be predicted beforehand by counting up the delegates committed to each candidate. A candidate who controls the support of 50 percent of the convention delegates will become the party's nominee.

The pathways to the 2008 presidential nominations were complex and chaotic. Nearly half the states chose a single day in February for their primary or caucus. A few states were allowed to go earlier and the rest were relegated to the end of the line. This scheduling of states' primaries across different dates made some events more important than others. Take the Pennsylvania primary, for example. This event held on April 22 was a crucial battle between Barack Obama and Hillary Clinton. Both campaigned heavily in the state: Obama spent \$10 million on television advertisements while Clinton's spending totaled to \$5 million.³ More than two million registered Pennsylvania Democrats voted in their primary for a turnout rate of approximately 60 percent. Yet for Republicans in Pennsylvania, their party's primary was anticlimactic. John McCain had already secured the number of delegates needed to win the Republican nomination, and all of the other major contenders had bowed out of the race. Only 800,000 Republicans, or one in four, bothered to vote in the Republican primary. Pennsylvania Democrats sure appeared to have more influence on their party's choice for the presidential nomination than did Pennsylvania Republicans.

The rules for winning convention delegates varied across states and the two parties. In the February 5 New Jersey Democratic primary, Hillary Clinton won the support of 54 percent of the voters. Under Democratic Party proportional representation rules, she was allocated 59 of the 107 delegates from the state. On the Republican side of the ballot in New Jersey, John McCain won 55 percent of the vote but was awarded all of the Republican delegates. Some Republican convention delegates are awarded under such winner-take-all rules, others by proportional representation. Some Republican delegates are directly elected, and in some caucuses, there are no formal rules at all. Commentators often argue

that the Democratic Party's proportional representation rules needlessly prolonged the battle between Obama and Clinton. Others feel that the awarding of all of a state's delegates to one candidate discounts the voices of the voters who supported other candidates.

The number of delegates a candidate could win in a single state also varied across the two parties. The vote from New York's Democratic primary would allocate 232 convention delegates, or 6.8 percent of the total of pledged delegates. The New York Republican primary was allotted 98 delegates, or 4.4 percent of the potential pledged total.⁴ In this case, it appears that New York Democrats have more influence on their party's nomination than do New York Republicans. Yet, New York is often a state in the Democratic column for presidential elections, and so its Democratic primary voters might warrant a greater say.

How Americans participate in the nomination process also varies across the states. Participation in primaries may be restricted to those who are registered with the party or it may be open to all voters. To participate in a caucus an individual needs to attend a local party meeting at a specific time and place. Those with work, school, or family commitments at this time cannot participate. The number of people willing and able to participate in a caucus may be extremely small. On the other hand, those who do attend the caucuses participate in a setting where they debate with their neighbors the merits of the various candidates. Such discrepancies between the two parties and across the states often lead to renewed calls for more reforms of the presidential nomination process.

The procedures used to nominate candidates for America's highest office have evolved over the years. Sometimes, the process changed due to deliberate plans of the parties or a group of reformers. At other times, changes happened more by happenstance. For example, the front-loaded primary calendar, where in 2008 nearly half the states held their primaries or caucuses on February 5, was not a planned event. Rather individual states wanted more clout, and all took the same path of moving their primary dates forward. The current nomination process is a hodgepodge of past reform movements, rules instituted by national and state parties, strategic behaviors of candidates, the actions of campaign professionals and campaign contributors, the involvement of citizen activists, and a few state and national laws. No grand scheme was used to create a rational system to nominate the candidates for the nation's chief executive office. The process is one that is constantly evolving: sometimes by leaps, sometimes by inches. The procedures are complicated, and the outcome subject to chance events.

Calls for reforming the presidential nomination system are now nearly 100 years old. In 1911, the first bill was introduced into Congress to establish a one-day national primary. In more recent years, congressional bills and other reform proposals have centered on clustering primaries on

specific dates by geographic region or state population sizes. None of the more than 300 bills introduced into Congress has been enacted into law.⁵ Yet, a demand for reform remains. In the early months of 2008, a number of newspaper editorials advocated for restructuring the process. The Portland *Oregonian* editorial, under the headline "A Helter-Skelter Primary System," lent its support to the regional primary format. The *Boston Globe* editorial, "Primary Train Wreck," asserted that "Reform is overdue." The *New York Times*, *Columbus Dispatch*, *Santa Fe New Mexican*, *Kansas City Star*, *Sacramento Bee*, and a host of other newspapers called for a switch to a regional or population-based primary schedule.⁶ The current system was viewed as too muddled and too biased. Yet, a few voices were heard in support of the current process. *Newsweek* columnist George F. Will argued that while the process is messy it produces the desired results. The public learns about the candidates through the staggered primary process, which allows them to make a meaningful choice among the candidates seeking the two parties' presidential nominations. Further, Will argues that this choice occurs within a framework of federalism that gives individual states wide discretion in their selection of rules and formats for public participation.⁷

The goal of this book is to make the reader a wiser consumer of such claims for and against reforming the presidential nomination system. To do so, the first chapter will explain how we got to today. What were the reforms and changes that led to a presidential nominating system at the beginning of the 21st century that was dominated by primary elections, many of which were sandwiched together on one early date in the election calendar? The second chapter concentrates on the 2000, 2004, and 2008 nominations for the Democratic and Republican parties. How did candidates' assets, public opinion, primary outcomes, and candidate attrition contribute to the outcomes of these presidential nominations? In Chapter 3, the messiness and potential biases of the current nomination process are analyzed. What are the effects of rules concerning delegate selection, citizen participation, and the election calendar? Chapter 4 looks at the various reforms and discusses the pros and cons of each. The final chapter reviews the oddities, biases, and strengths of the U.S. presidential nomination process.

A Short History of Presidential Nominations

The nomination of Abraham Lincoln by the Republican Party in 1860 was vastly different from the paths to the nomination taken by John McCain or Barack Obama in 2008. In May 1860, Republicans met in Chicago to name their presidential nominee. No one knew in advance who this nominee would be. Primary elections did not exist, nor did reliable public opinion polls. If there was a frontrunner for the nomination, it was

New York senator William Henry Seward. An outspoken opponent of slavery, Seward had the backing of powerful eastern financial interests and numerous loyal supporters who came to Chicago to advocate for his candidacy. The New York delegation alone, comprised of 70 individuals, would provide one-third of the needed 233 votes. Seward, however, was opposed by the southern state delegations, and he had limited support from the western states.⁸

A variety of other politicians were contenders for the Republican nomination, as well. Ohio senator Salmon Portland Chase was a vocal opponent of slavery, and as such, a competitor to Seward for the same faction of the party. Chase would have to overcome his past affiliations with the Democratic Party and his opposition to the tariff, a tax on imports, supported by the manufacturing interests. Although Edward Bates from Missouri also opposed slavery, being from a border state might make him more acceptable to southerners. On the other hand, Bates had offended recent immigrants with his previous support of the Know-Nothings movement, with its anti-immigrant, anti-Catholic, anti-slavery, and pro-temperance positions. Another possibility was Supreme Court Justice John McLean, but he was 73 years old, in ill health, and needed as an anti-slavery vote on the high court. The Pennsylvania delegation would support its favorite son, Senator Simon Cameron.

The Illinois delegation also had a favorite-son candidate: Abraham Lincoln, a former one-term congressman known for oratorical skills. Two years earlier, Lincoln had faced Democrat Stephen Douglas in a series of seven debates as each sought the Illinois seat in the U.S. Senate. Senators at the time were appointed by the state legislatures, so the debates were aimed at the members of the Illinois state legislature. Still, these debates received widespread newspaper coverage. The topic was slavery and its expansion into the western territories and new states. Douglas advocated letting residents of the new states decide, while Lincoln opposed any expansion of slavery. The state legislature selected Douglas over Lincoln. Prior to the 1860 convention, Lincoln's speeches were reissued in a series of books. Yet, Lincoln remained an unknown in the East. Although at the time it was deemed unseemly to campaign for the presidential nomination, Lincoln in the year before the convention engaged in a series of 23 speeches to Republican gatherings across the nation to increase his reputation.

At the convention, each candidate's handlers maneuvered to put together a winning coalition. Behind the scenes, Lincoln's handlers negotiated with several states to consolidate the anti-Seward vote. If Lincoln could deny Seward the needed votes on the first ballot, he could pick up the support of additional states on the second. Lincoln's handlers also packed the spectator seats with Lincoln supporters, some with counterfeit tickets which denied seats to Seward's backers. Seward led on the first two ballots but could not gain the majority of the votes needed. On the

third ballot, Lincoln pulled ahead and won the nomination. Lincoln never attended the convention. As was the custom of the time, he waited at his home in Springfield for a delegation from the convention to come tell him of the nomination. Along with nominating Lincoln, the 1860 Republican convention ratified its platform opposing the expansion of slavery, supporting a tariff to protect American industry, and proposing a homestead act to provide land to western settlers.

The 1860 Republican convention was vastly different from those held in 2008. First and foremost, in the 1800s the identity of the party's nominee was not known prior to the convention. Each candidate's handlers bargained with the state delegations, some of which were controlled by party bosses, to gain support for their candidate. Deals were struck in smoke-filled back rooms between a candidate's handlers and various state leaders. But events on the convention floor also could galvanize the delegates, such as in 1896 when William Jennings Bryan's "Cross of Gold" speech against the tight money standards of the day led to his nomination, despite his youth and lack of a national reputation. Party leaders in the 1800s had three goals in mind when selecting a candidate. They wanted a candidate who could unify the party, who represented the party's positions on the issues of the day, and most importantly, who could win the fall election. These three goals are shared by the parties today, but the primaries and caucuses provide the information on the issue positions and electoral strength of the candidates. The major role of the convention has become to ensure party unity.

Two Early Views: Nomination by Political Elites

The Founders' Plan?

The U.S. Constitution does not cover how candidates would be nominated for the presidency or any other office. Most aspects of elections, such as voter eligibility, would be left up to the states. In addition, the Constitution contains no mention of political parties. At the Constitutional Convention, the founders struggled with devising a method for selecting the country's chief executive, not the nomination of candidates to be considered for that selection. Various plans were debated before settling on an Electoral College made up of temporary electors who would cast ballots from the states to choose the president. The method of selecting these electors would be left up to the states, whether they were appointed by the state legislatures or elected by the public. The founders' reasons for settling on the Electoral College were varied. Some harbored a distrust of the average citizen's ability to select a chief executive, and it was a common practice at the time to have indirect selection for government offices. The electors, presumably, would be the political and economic elite of a state

who would conscientiously consider the merits of various candidates. Smaller states favored an indirect method because they feared that a directly elected president would always come from the more populous states. Others made a theoretical argument that the Electoral College would allow for an independent executive branch, rather than one appointed by the legislature, as was common in the state governments of the day. Finally, a temporary Electoral College was viewed as less susceptible to corruption than the national legislature.⁹

While the founders did not create a mechanism for nominating candidates, without political parties to structure the vote in the Electoral College, it would function more as a nominating board than as a body to select the president.¹⁰ Each state's Electoral College members would meet on the same day but in their own state capital. Given the hardships of communications, these electors would be operating independently from one another. As a result, Electoral College votes would be scattered among national, regional, and even state leaders. No one candidate would have sufficient support to meet the 50 percent requirement needed to win. Instead, Congress would choose the president from among the top contenders. George Mason, commenting at the Constitutional Convention, noted that this was the expected pattern 19 out of 20 times: the Electoral College would nominate, and Congress would elect the president.

Coordination of preferences across the states, however, would make the Electoral College a decisive mechanism for electing presidents. In the first presidential election, Alexander Hamilton worked behind the scenes to ensure that the electors supported the team of George Washington for president and John Adams for vice president.¹¹ During the Washington administration, political parties developed inside of Congress. The Federalist Party was led by Alexander Hamilton and supported policies for a stronger national government. The Democratic-Republican Party favored state governments and formed around Thomas Jefferson. When George Washington announced that he would not seek a third term in 1796, the two parties turned to the meetings of their members in Congress, i.e., the congressional caucuses, to select the party's nominee for the presidency.¹² With the parties coordinating the Electoral College vote around two competing candidates, one candidate was likely to garner 50 percent of the Electoral College votes and win the presidential election.

Congressional Caucus: 1800–1824

The congressional caucuses nominated the presidential candidates for a period of 20 years. In the beginning, these congressional caucuses had many merits. They provided an authoritative nomination for each party. Given the difficulty of travel and communications in the early

19th century, the congressional caucuses provided a ready-made meeting of party leaders. The presidency was a national office, and the national parties controlled the nominations. In fact, a norm developed for prominent politicians to first hold the office of Secretary of State and then become the party's presidential nominee.

By 1820 the Federalist Party had lost much of its strength and did not nominate a candidate for president. The country had only one remaining national party, the Democratic-Republican Party. By 1824 a number of party leaders wanted the presidential bid. William Crawford was nominated by the congressional caucus, but this process was becoming increasingly discredited. Many party members did not participate in the caucus in 1824, and it earned the nickname of "King Caucus." Three other candidates ran as presidential candidates from the Democratic-Republican Party in 1824, being nominated by various state legislatures. With a four-person contest, no candidate won a majority in the Electoral College. Congress selected John Quincy Adams to be president, though Andrew Jackson had the largest percent of the original Electoral College vote.

What had happened to the reputation of the congressional caucus? Mostly, the political landscape changed quickly in the first 20 years of the 19th century. Most states switched from limiting the electorate to wealthy or propertied men to allowing all white males to vote. The selection of members of the Electoral College moved from the state legislatures to a public vote. The development of a partisan press allowed for a wider, national debate over government policies. The political parties were no longer merely groups of men in Congress, but now they were organizations of leaders and voters in state and local politics. These newer party members wanted a say in the presidential nominations. Thus, the congressional caucuses came to be viewed as unrepresentative and undemocratic. The system also lacked a true separation of powers between the executive and legislative branches, because Congress was nominating the presidential candidates.¹³

In 1828, Andrew Jackson won the presidency and transformed the Democratic-Republican Party into the Democratic Party, though the name change did not officially occur until 1844. This new party favored patronage to fill government positions, rewarding political supporters with government posts. Jackson's Democratic Party also opposed the nationalistic policies of the old Federalist Party, preferring power to be held by the states rather than the national government. States would be allowed to run their own governments and economies, including economies based on slavery. The opposition would eventually form into the Whig Party. Democrats versus Whigs became the second party system in U.S. history. This new mass-based party system needed a more democratic means to nominate the president.

The Party Convention Eras

Autonomous Conventions: 1832-1908

The answer to the new, authoritative nominating system was the national convention. These conventions would bring together representatives of the party from all the states, but these convention delegates would be short-term representatives. Once the business of nominating the president was completed, the conventions would disband. Following the example of the small Anti-Masonic Party, the Democratic Party held its first national convention in Baltimore in 1832. The Whigs adopted the practice in 1839.

The convention system transferred party power from the national legislature to the state parties. States were given leeway in the method for selecting their convention delegates. In some states, the governor or a state-level party committee would appoint the delegates. More frequently, local party meetings, also called caucuses, would select delegates to attend county caucuses, then a state convention, and finally the national convention. The delegates represented the state parties, not a preference for a political candidate. State parties might even choose to impose a unit rule, requiring all of their delegates to vote as a whole. The Republican Party never adopted the unit rule, but the Democratic Party did not formally ban the unit rule until 1968 by which time only four states still used it. The Democratic Party until 1936 also required a presidential candidate to win the support of two-thirds of all delegates to become the nominee. This rule was to protect the smaller states from being consistently overpowered by the larger states. It also provided the southern states with a veto over any Democratic nominee.¹⁴

Nomination politics in this classic era of political conventions often meant that multiple ballots were needed before one candidate emerged as a winner. These roll calls of state delegations were the indicators of support for the various candidates. If a candidate's support failed to grow between roll calls, he could be forced out of the contest. If a candidate increased his support from one roll call to the next, other delegates would look more favorably on him. In fact, state delegations wanted to join the group of delegates supporting a candidate just before he would secure enough votes to win the nomination; they could then make greater claims on the candidate if he won the election. This process of strategically moving toward a winning candidate was called jumping on the candidate's bandwagon. Some states held off their support in the early rounds by supporting a home-state candidate, called a favorite son, rather than casting their ballots for one of the national contenders. Other states were controlled by a party boss who could bargain with the candidates' operatives to throw the weight of his state behind one of the national contenders.

In some conventions, a stalemate occurred between two leading contenders, neither of whom could secure the required number of votes needed for the nomination. In these cases, the convention might turn to a new compromise candidate, who was called a dark horse, since he had little chance of winning the nomination in the initial rounds. In 1844, James K. Polk became the first dark-horse candidate to win a presidential nomination when he secured the needed votes on the 9th ballot.

The political conventions of the mid- to late 19th century were autonomous bodies. They determined who would become the presidential nominees through internal bargaining. They had to because no other mechanisms existed to judge the support of the candidates: no public opinion polls, no primary elections. In addition, the norm against candidates engaging in preconvention campaigning also gave few clues as to the strengths and weaknesses of potential nominees. Thus, the convention delegates battled it out over the nominees. They also, after 1840, developed a list of party issues, called a platform. At times, the battle over the nomination became intertwined with battles over the platform, as when William Jennings Bryan's speech in the platform debate over the gold standard led to his nomination.

Mostly Autonomous Conventions: 1912–1944

The legal process for nominating presidential candidates remained the same in the first half of the 20th century. Indeed, the legal process of being named by the party's national convention is still in place today. What changed was the ability of the convention to name a candidate independent of outside influences. During the first half of the 20th century presidential primaries were introduced and reliable public opinion polling methods were devised. Both could provide information on the popular appeal of the various candidates. Candidates also altered their behavior, engaging in more overt preconvention campaigning. The nature of the conventions also changed, with fewer state party bosses and more avenues for national interest groups to play a role. Finally, the conventions became more public, with radio coverage beginning in 1924. Television coverage would arrive in 1948.

With more public information on candidate strengths and weaknesses, with fewer traditional bargaining agents within the convention, and with the constraints of doing business under the glare of a national audience, protracted fights over the nomination, involving multiple roll calls, gradually disappeared. A few conventions reverted back to the old style, with the 1924 Democratic convention using 103 ballots (the most ever) over a three-week period before settling on the nomination of John W. Davis. The Republicans used 10 ballots in 1920 to nominate Warren Harding. Since those instances, the only multiple ballot nominations on

the Democratic side have been four ballots to nominate Franklin Delano Roosevelt in 1932 and three to nominate Adlai Stevenson in 1952. The Republicans used six ballots to nominate Wendell Willkie in 1940 and three in 1948 to put forward Thomas Dewey's name as their nominee. Yet, more and more nominations were being decided on the first ballot, going to a predetermined national favorite.

Conventions in the early 20th century also began to center more on the candidates, with candidates now coming to the convention. In 1932 Franklin Delano Roosevelt was the first major party candidate to give an acceptance speech at the convention. In 1944, the Republican Party joined in when Thomas E. Dewey gave an acceptance speech. Presidential nominee acceptance speeches are now the final activity of conventions and planned for primetime media coverage.

The Origins of Presidential Primaries

During the first two decades of the 20th century, states adopted primary laws to select party candidates for local and state offices, as well as for members of Congress. These primaries were part of the Progressive Movement's series of reforms to bring more political power to the public and away from the parties, which many viewed as corrupt. In these direct primaries, the candidate who won the most votes (e.g., a plurality voting rule) automatically became the party's nominee. Southern states developed their own tradition of requiring an absolute majority of the vote for nomination, which led to runoff primaries when no candidate won 50 percent of the vote in the initial round.

While almost all states adopted the direct primary to nominate representatives or governors, far fewer adopted presidential primaries. Further, presidential primaries would be an indirect voice for the public. Presidential primaries would select convention delegates, who would continue to choose the presidential nominees. Florida in 1904 became the first state to select its convention delegates through a primary. Voters in Florida's presidential primary cast ballots directly for individual convention delegates, but at no place on the ballot were the presidential candidate preferences of these potential delegates listed. A 1906 Pennsylvania law allowed delegates to list their preferred presidential candidate, but none of those competing to be delegates in the 1908 Democratic or Republican primaries did so. The first separate preference vote for presidential candidates came in Oregon in 1912, in a law that also required all delegates elected to support the candidate that won the preference primary.¹⁵

Advocates argued primaries would reduce political corruption, reduce the influence of party bosses at the state and national levels, give rank-and-file supporters a voice in nominations, and educate voters about the merits of the various candidates.¹⁶ Opponents of the primary process averred

primaries would not lead to the selection of a candidate who could win the general election as well as small, face-to-face groups at the convention could. Further, primaries could be divisive—supporters of losing candidates would be unwilling to vote for the winning candidate in the fall election. Primaries would not cure corruption, they argued, because it would take money to win. Finally, they asserted that few voters would participate.¹⁷

The first extensive use of presidential primaries occurred in 1912. Former president Theodore Roosevelt decided to once again seek the presidency. He entered 12 of the 13 primaries, winning 9 of them. The Republican convention, however, renominated sitting president William Howard Taft instead. Angered by his defeat at the convention, Roosevelt ran as a third-party candidate under the Progressive or Bull Moose label. With two Republican candidates (Roosevelt, Taft) and only one Democratic candidate (Woodrow Wilson) running in the 1912 presidential election, the Democratic candidate won despite the fact that the Republican Party was the larger party at the time. Thus, the first real test of presidential primaries proved one of the criticisms of the opponents: primaries could be divisive.

The number of states using presidential primaries rose to 26 in 1916, but with World War I the Progressive reform era came to an end. Presidential primaries fell into disfavor. Many party leaders viewed them as too costly for candidates, the parties, and state governments. The 1930s brought the New Deal realignment, with greater interparty differences between the Democratic and Republican parties. Policy conflicts were focused between the two parties rather than within either party. This too led to fewer calls for party reform. Over time, states rescinded presidential primary laws, resulting in 16 or 17 states holding primaries during any election year through the 1960s.¹⁸

Even the presidential primaries that remained in place were not an important part of the nomination process. The Democratic Party had few nomination decisions to make in the 1930s and 1940s as they renominated President Franklin Delano Roosevelt three times. Candidates seeing that fewer than half of the convention delegates were selected in primaries, and that winning primaries did not necessarily mean winning the nomination, did not campaign in them. Primary ballots, rather than containing the names of national candidates, listed favorite-son candidates or unpledged delegates. Thus, after 1912, primaries did not play a role in presidential nominations during the first half of the 20th century.

Public influence on nominations in the early to mid-20th century came mainly through public opinion surveys rather than voting at the polls. The party elite wanted to nominate a popular candidate for the top of the ticket with the assumption that voters who cast a ballot for the party's presidential candidate would continue to vote for the party's candidates for other offices further down the ballot. The beginning of scientific public

opinion polling in the 1930s provided a reliable indicator of public preferences. From 1936 to 1972 the candidate who led in the Gallup poll prior to the primaries won the nomination 85 percent of the time. During this time period, the results of the primaries also had little influence in changing these national preferences: 90 percent of the time the pre-primary poll leader remained the poll leader after the primaries were over.¹⁹

A Mixed System: Conventions and Primaries, 1948–1960

After World War II, presidential primaries became a somewhat more important component of the presidential nomination process, but they still would not be the dominant way for a candidate to win the nomination or the most typical method for selecting convention delegates. The major change came in candidates' strategies. Increasingly some candidates began to view presidential primaries as a component of their strategy—not to win the nomination outright but to prove to party leaders that they could win votes. Thus, the nomination process during this period is best viewed as a mixed system: partly a primary strategy but partly a semi-autonomous convention.

A change in candidate strategy after World War II helped to revitalize the presidential primaries with some candidates actively campaigning in the primary states in order to win victories. This new candidate strategy was possibly due to changes in air travel, allowing candidates to campaign in primaries scattered across the nation, and a more nationalized media (e.g., radio followed by television) which would bring the results of these primaries to a national audience. Yet, many of the candidates who tried the new primary-centered campaign tactic failed to win the presidential nomination. Party leaders at the conventions still had the decisive voice in the nomination, and too few delegates were chosen through the primary process to gain control of a majority of the delegates. Presidential primary victories were one tool that candidates could employ, but it was a risky tool. Primary victories could help a candidate's reputation, but a primary loss often signaled the end of a campaign. Thus, not all candidates pursued the primary route as part of their campaign strategy.

John F. Kennedy's 1960 nomination strategy shows the mixed mode method of seeking the presidential nomination during this era.²⁰ After losing his bid to be the Democratic Party's vice presidential nominee in 1956, Kennedy set out to court party leaders across the country. He made numerous visits to state and local party events, building a personal connection to the far flung party members who were the core of the party activists at the time. Yet, Kennedy still needed to demonstrate to these leaders that he could win votes. So he entered 7 of the 16 primaries held in 1960. Two proved to be the most important. The first was the Wisconsin primary,

where his defeat over Minnesota senator Hubert Humphrey demonstrated Kennedy's greater popular appeal in Humphrey's own region of the country. Kennedy's West Virginia primary victory was important to prove that a Catholic candidate could win in a heavily Protestant state. With the personal connections Kennedy made with his cross-country trips and his victories in select primaries, Kennedy secured the 1960 Democratic nomination. Not all candidates in that year pursued the nomination by entering the primaries, as Kennedy and Humphrey had. Texas senator Lyndon Johnson, who was also the majority party leader in the Senate, calculated that Kennedy and Humphrey would knock each other out of the race with a mixed record of primary wins and losses. The regular party members at the national convention, Johnson reasoned, would then turn to him to be the nominee.

By the time of the mixed system of primaries and conventions, the conventions had lost much of their autonomy. The conventions were now constrained by primary results, if one candidate was successful, and by other indicators of candidate popularity, such as public opinion polls. The conventions were public affairs, unfolding before a national television audience. In an often quoted assessment, William Carleton in 1957 asserted that

It is probable that by 1976 or 1980 all that a nominating convention will do will be to meet to ratify the nomination for president of *the* national favorite already determined by *the* agencies, formal and informal, of mass democracy; . . . to endorse a platform already written by leaders responding to national and group pressures; and to stage a rally for the benefit of the national television audience. Delegates and "leaders" in national conventions, like presidential electors, will have become rubber stamps.²¹

Carleton's predictions came to fruition in the 1970s after a series of party reforms and individual state actions developed a new nominating system that was dominated by the presidential primaries.

Moving to a Primary-Dominated System

Initial movements toward reforms in the Democratic Party began in the 1950s, but came to a head at the 1968 convention. The early movement toward national standards for delegate selection to Democratic conventions centered on divisions in the party over civil rights. After the Democratic Party adopted a civil rights platform at its 1948 convention, some southern delegates walked out. In the fall election, Strom Thurmond ran for president as a Dixiecrat (formally called the States' Rights Democratic Party), replacing the national Democratic ticket in four states.

Northern Democrats responded with a demand for party loyalty from future convention delegates, and the 1956 convention rules required state delegations to assure placement of the Democratic ticket on their state's ballot.

In 1964, two competing groups of delegates were chosen from Mississippi, the regular Democratic Party delegation containing only whites and the Mississippi Freedom Democratic Party delegation containing mostly blacks. After a lengthy Credentials Committee debate, the convention adopted a compromise of seating the regular Mississippi delegation but requiring them to pledge to support the national Democratic ticket, seating two of the Freedom Party leaders as delegates, and requiring that for the 1968 convention no state delegation would be seated that limited participation by race.

The compromise was not universally accepted: the Mississippi and Alabama delegations walked out and the Freedom Party supporters protested. Nevertheless, the 1964 Democratic convention established the Special Equal Rights Committee which created six delegate selection guidelines for the 1968 convention that would prohibit racial discrimination in each state's method of selecting delegates. At the 1968 convention, the Credentials Committee did deny seats to the regular Mississippi delegation and replaced it with the Loyal Democrat delegation chosen under nondiscriminatory rules. Thus, by the early 1960s, the national Democratic Party had begun to make rules on who could be delegates and how they would be selected.²²

In 1968, the Democratic Party was deeply divided over the Vietnam War. Minnesota senator Eugene McCarthy decided to challenge President Lyndon Johnson's renomination. College students cut their hair, getting "Clean for Gene," to campaign for the anti-war candidate in the New Hampshire primary scheduled for March 12. In that Democratic primary, McCarthy's total of 42.4 percent to Johnson's 49.5 percent was enough for the media to call McCarthy the "winner." On March 16, New York senator Robert Kennedy entered the race as the second anti-war candidate. On March 31, President Johnson abruptly left the race for the Democratic nomination asserting he could not negotiate an end to the war at the same time as he was running for reelection. Vice President Hubert Humphrey was encouraged by party leaders to step into the race as Johnson's replacement. He did, but Humphrey did not run in the remaining primaries. Besides, in many states, it was too late to become an official candidate.

McCarthy and Kennedy each won crucial primaries. McCarthy won an important victory in the May 28 Oregon primary. Kennedy followed with a win in the California primary on June 4, but was assassinated leaving his victory rally at a Los Angeles hotel. Meanwhile, Humphrey had quietly secured the support of enough delegates to be assured of a victory at the convention. Humphrey obtained his delegates in states that did not

hold primaries, the majority at the time, or in primary states where the preference ballots were not connected to delegate selection. Yet, Humphrey's nomination would lack legitimacy as the public began to increasingly view the primaries as an important avenue to voice their opinion on the candidates.²³ The 1968 Democratic convention held in Chicago proved to be a disaster for the party. Outside the convention, violence broke out between anti-war demonstrators and the Chicago police. Inside the convention, a floor fight over the party's platform position on the Vietnam War ended with the anti-war position losing. Disillusioned delegates marched and protested, a disruption televised to a nationwide audience.

McCarthy and Kennedy supporters felt that the delegate selection process had discriminated against them. One-third of the convention delegates had been chosen by the end of 1967, too early for those who would be drawn in to support one of the two anti-war candidates. Many of the states also used rules that allowed for delegate selection to be dominated by party veterans and some events were unpublicized to newcomers.²⁴ For example, in Georgia and Louisiana the governors selected all of their state's Democratic convention delegates. In eight other states, the party's state committees selected the delegations. In many states, no rules appeared to govern the selection of delegates.²⁵

Even in the primary states, the popular vote for the candidates did not always determine the selection of the convention delegates. In Pennsylvania, only Eugene McCarthy's name was listed on the preference portion of the ballot, and he won 76 percent of the popular vote with the remainder being write-in votes for Hubert Humphrey and Robert Kennedy. Yet Pennsylvania's delegates were selected in a separate section of the ballot, where individuals ran to be delegates without listing their candidate preferences. In addition, one-third of Pennsylvania's delegates were simply appointed by the state party committee. As a result, 84 percent of Pennsylvania's convention delegates supported Hubert Humphrey while 76 percent of the voters had supported McCarthy.²⁶ With growing dissatisfaction over delegate selection rules, or lack of rules, at the end of the 1968 convention the Democratic Party voted to establish a commission to investigate the rules for delegate selection and to develop national standards.

The Democratic Commission on Party Structure and Delegate Selection, most commonly called the McGovern-Fraser Commission after its two chairs (first South Dakota senator George McGovern followed by Minnesota representative Donald Fraser), developed 18 guidelines that states would have to follow in order for their delegations to be seated at the 1972 convention. Among the major provisions were

- 1 A mandate to increase the demographic representativeness of state delegations along the lines of race, gender and age.

- 2 Rules that party meetings, such as local caucuses or state conventions, would need to follow if a state selected convention delegates through these methods. These rules cover items such as quorum requirements and the banning of proxy voting.
- 3 Requiring public notices of dates and sites of any meeting or primary at which convention delegates would be selected.
- 4 Requiring potential delegates to indicate their candidate preference or state that they were uncommitted.
- 5 Banning selection of any delegate before January 1 of the election year.
- 6 Forbidding automatic selection of party officials as ex officio delegates.
- 7 Allowing no more than 10 percent of delegates to be appointed by a committee.²⁷

In general, two basic principles were highlighted. First, the delegate selection process must be open to any Democrat who wanted to participate. Nominating events must be publicized and conducted under open rules. Second, the process must be timely in that it occurred during the election year. The McGovern-Fraser Commissioners were aiming at a fairer delegate selection process, whether it was in a local caucus or a primary election. What happened instead is that the new rules led to a proliferation of presidential primaries. Many state party leaders concluded that it would be easiest to comply with the new rules through a primary. Other party leaders felt that a primary would isolate presidential politics from other state party business.²⁸

The new Democratic Party rules were not the only reason that more states began to enact presidential primary laws. Media coverage of primaries in the 1950s and 1960s had given extra legitimacy to this process for selecting delegates. In addition, many states saw that media coverage of primaries gave those states free publicity. Candidates tromping through the New Hampshire snows were a free advertisement for its winter sports vacations. New party activists within the states also were demanding changes for greater participation and more intraparty democracy.²⁹

The resulting growth in the number of presidential primaries is illustrated in Figure 1.1, while the percent of each party's convention delegates selected through these primaries is given in Figure 1.2. In 1968, 15 states held presidential primaries choosing 40 percent of the delegates. Even if a candidate swept all the primaries, he would not have a sufficient number of delegate votes at the convention based on these primary victories alone. Not quite half of the states would hold presidential primaries in 1972, but these states now chose a majority of the convention delegates. In 1976, a majority of states would hold primaries, and they would select three out of four delegates. Thus, starting in the 1970s, candidates could

win sufficient numbers of delegates in the primary states to secure the presidential nomination.

Since 1980, an average of 36 primaries are held in any year, selecting two-thirds of the Democratic delegates and nearly 80 percent of the Republican delegates. (The smaller percentage of Democratic delegates selected through primaries since 1984 is due to the party's use of super-delegates, which are unpledged elected and party officials.) The decline in the number of presidential primaries in 2004 came as a handful of states eliminated presidential primaries in the face of tight state budgets. Holding a presidential primary costs states millions of dollars. The even greater decline on the Republican side was due to the lack of any challengers to President Bush's renomination, leading a few more states to cancel their Republican primaries. In 2008, the number of presidential primaries returned to an average level with 39 Democratic and 41 Republican contests which selected 68 percent of the Democratic delegates and 81 percent of the Republican delegates.

In most states, if a primary is used for one party it is used for the other. But every year a small number of states have separate procedures for each party. For example, in 2008 Idaho Democrats selected their delegates through a caucus, while Idaho Republicans used a primary. Also, in a small number of cases, the date of delegate selection varies across the two parties. The Democratic Party in New Mexico in 2008 sponsored its own presidential primary on February 5, while the Republican Party used the official state primary held on June 3.

The Democratic Party continued to have a series of reform commissions in the 1970s and 1980s. They debated rules concerning the allocation of convention delegates to match voter preferences, who should be allowed to participate in the Democratic Party presidential nominations, whether delegates should be legally bound to support a particular candidate at the convention, which dates to allow delegate selection to occur, and how to ensure a more demographically representative convention. We will return to these questions in Chapter 3.

So far, the story on presidential nomination reform in the mid-20th century has focused on the Democratic Party. This reform era did play out more within the Democratic Party, just as the Progressive reform era of the early 20th century unfolded more within Republican circles. The Republican Party in the 1960s and 1970s established two reform commissions that dealt with questions such as opening up the caucuses and state convention processes, banning proxy voting, abolishing ex officio delegates, and ensuring the selection of more female delegates. Yet, generally less demand existed for reforms within the Republican Party at this time. The party was not as divided over issues as were the Democrats, nor did the Republican Party have outdated convention rules such as the unit rule. The Republican Party also maintains a structure that allows individual

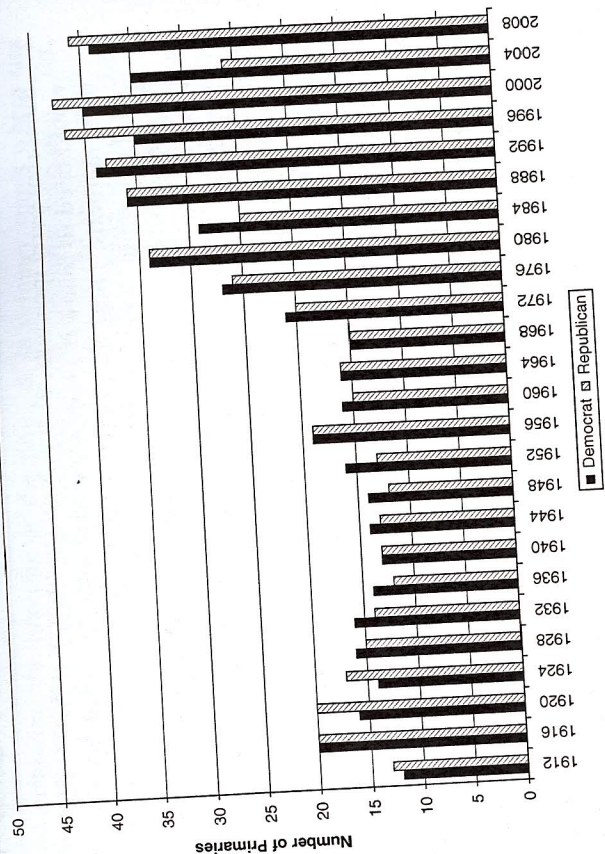


Figure 1.1 Number of primaries each year by party. Source: Guide to U.S. Elections, 5th edition, volume 1 (Washington, DC: CQ Press, 2005), p. 318, updated by author.

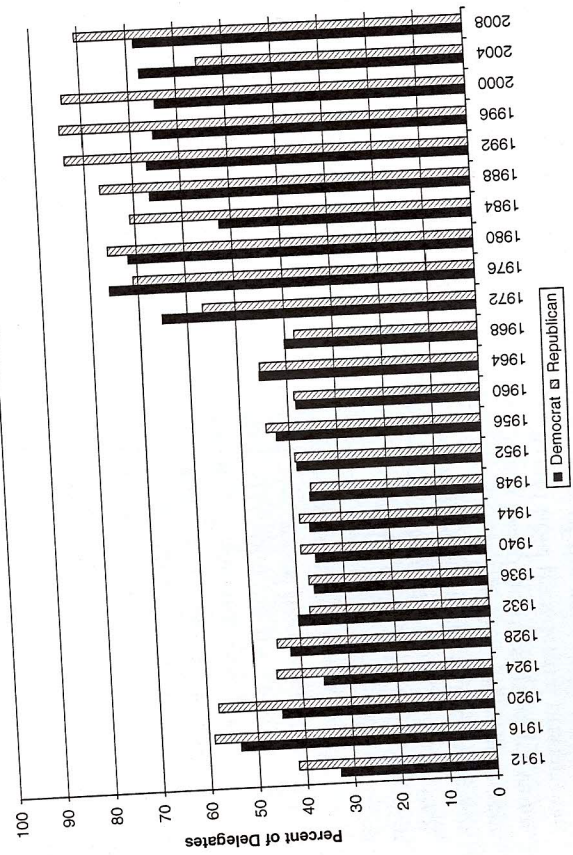


Figure 1.2 Percent of convention delegates selected through primaries by year and party. Source: Guide to U.S. Elections, 5th edition, volume 1, p. 318, updated by author.

state parties more autonomy. Finally, Republican Party rules were more difficult to change, requiring changes in delegate selection rules to be approved by the prior national convention.³⁰

Changes in delegate selection rules in the mid-20th century, the Progressive reforms which introduced primaries in the early years of that century, and the abandonment of presidential nomination by congressional caucus in the early 19th century all followed a similar reform cycle format.³¹ The first stage of this nomination reform cycle begins with a growing concern that existing procedures are unfair. In the 1820s the congressional caucuses were increasingly seen as unrepresentative, not allowing a voice for the growing party structure in the states. In the 1910s the political conventions were seen as dominated by corrupt party officials and did not provide a mechanism for a public voice. In the 1960s the voice that the public did have in selecting convention delegates was viewed as inadequate. In the second stage of the reform cycle, a crisis brings these lingering concerns to the forefront, whether it was the nomination of four Democratic-Republican candidates for president in 1824 or the rancor at the 1968 Democratic convention. The third stage is to put into place a set of reforms: a switch to a political convention, the enactment of presidential primaries, or a party commission issuing national rules for delegate selection. The fourth stage is the reaction to the new rules and perhaps a backlash. The Democratic Party continued to modify its rules after the McGovern-Fraser Commission, and even reversed itself on the ban on automatic selection of party officials as delegates. Yet, each new nominating system maintains a core set of reforms.

These series of reforms, from the 1830s to the 1980s, have changed the locus of control over presidential nominations. The switch from the congressional caucuses to the political conventions in the 1830s moved the center of party power over presidential nominations from the national to the state parties. The reform movement of the mid-20th century restored the ability of the national party to dictate to the state parties, and state governments, the rules for presidential nominations. Today, the national parties set the rules for delegate selection, but the states continue to have leeway on the selection of primaries versus caucuses, dates of delegate selection, and within the Republican Party, methods of allocating delegates based on voters' candidate preferences.

The Primary-Dominated Era: 1972 and Forward

Presidential nominations in 2008 were conducted under the procedures started in the 1970s. With more than a majority of convention delegates selected through presidential primaries, candidates could now accumulate a winning total of delegates by entering these primaries. No longer were candidates entering primaries to demonstrate their electoral strength to

the party regulars who made up the convention delegates. The primaries were now *the method* for candidates to have their own supporters selected as convention delegates. And with open and publicized caucuses, presidential contenders could also have their supporters selected as delegates in the remainder of the states. The public by voting in primaries and participating in caucuses would have a direct say in the selection of the Democratic and Republican candidates for president.

The candidates who would claim the Democratic and Republican nominations would become evident well before the party conventions, still held in late summer of each election year. When one candidate had enough of their supporters selected as delegates to constitute 50 percent of the convention total, that candidate would become the party's unofficial nominee. With the exception of the 2008 Democratic contests, the unofficial nominee is often known by the middle of March. At that time, one candidate has the required number of delegates, or nearly the required number of delegates. The remaining candidates have already dropped out of the contest, due to losses in early presidential primaries or because they lagged behind in delegate totals. Thus, in 2008 John McCain claimed the Republican mantle after Thompson, Giuliani, Romney, and Huckabee dropped out. Even Barack Obama secured the nomination at the beginning of June when the last of the presidential primaries were held.

Presidential nominations are still officially bestowed at the national conventions. The role of the convention, however, has switched from selecting the party's presidential nominee to unifying the party behind that nominee. At some point, the convention will have the traditional roll call of states to have a public announcement of delegate preferences. The totals for the winning candidate are often higher than those initially gained from primary victories, as candidates who withdrew from the race release their delegates who most often switch their allegiance to the presumptive nominee. At the 2008 Republican convention, John McCain received the support of 98 percent of the delegates. The roll call of states at the Democratic convention was halted at New York to allow Hillary Clinton to call for Barack Obama's nomination to be by acclamation, a motion that easily passed.

Today's conventions are well-orchestrated publicity events for the two parties. The goal is to show party unity and to have no convention surprises. The presumptive presidential nominee will have already announced his or her selection of a vice presidential candidate, typically in the week before the convention. The party platform has been prewritten by a committee, containing the issue positions of the party's nominee and, perhaps, a few concessions to the losing candidates. The convention schedule contains many short speeches, by elected officials such as governors or senators, or by interest groups associated with the party. One person is selected to give the convention's keynote address, a major speech

intended to highlight the goals of the party. As previously noted, Barack Obama made his first major national speech giving the keynote address at the 2004 Democratic convention. On the second to last night of the convention, the vice presidential nominee gives her or his speech. The final night is reserved for the speech of the presidential nominee. At the close of the presidential candidate's speech, balloons drop from the convention hall ceiling, or in the case of Obama's outdoor speech in 2008, fireworks are set off. A successful convention will boost the nominee's numbers in the national polls by 6 percentage points, at least temporarily.³²

Having recapped the history of presidential nomination politics in this first chapter, the next two chapters of the book will take a deeper look into the primary-dominated nomination process (Chapter 2) and its potential problems and biases (Chapter 3). Some feel that the current system is in need of additional reform, and Chapter 4 will investigate these plans. But as the history of presidential nomination demonstrates, the outcome of any new reform is hard to predict. Chapter 5 will conclude this discussion by highlighting the pluses and minuses of early 21st-century U.S. presidential nomination politics.

Presidential Nomination Politics at the Dawn of the 21st Century

At first glance, each presidential nomination contest appears to be unique. Folklore develops on how certain instances or decisions were crucial to the battle being waged. One such example is the frequent retelling of the events from a Manchester, New Hampshire coffee shop in 2008 when an audience member asked Senator Hillary Clinton how she could continue to campaign given the on-going adversity (and a loss in the Iowa caucuses). Clinton replied, "It's not easy . . . I couldn't do it if I just didn't passionately believe it was the right thing to do . . . I just don't want to see us fall backwards."¹ Did this wistful (or as depicted in some media accounts tearful) response turn the tide in the 2008 New Hampshire primary, leading to a Clinton come-back and setting up the long battle between Clinton and Senator Barack Obama? Did Howard Dean's scream at the conclusion of his pep talk to supporters after losing the 2004 Iowa caucuses doom his campaign? At other times, "Monday morning quarterback" criticize candidates for flaws in their strategies. For example, did Senator Bill Bradley's decision in 2000 to compete vigorously (and lose) in Iowa cause him to forfeit his early lead in New Hampshire?² Still others ask whether media bias distorts the outcome, such as questioning whether undue favorable coverage of McCain in 2000 or Obama in 2008 garnered them additional support at the polls.³

Presidential nomination battles have lots of intricacies because there are so many factors involved: numerous candidates, primaries and caucuses across the 50 states (and several territories), different rules for the two parties, an ever-changing calendar, and the impact of new technology. Each year a new group of candidates decides to seek their party's presidential nomination. Some are well known, some are not. Some have a better chance of winning the nomination bid than others. Neither a uniform set of primary rules nor a standardized calendar of dates exist, because primary dates and rules are governed by the national parties, state parties, and state governments. These three groups often have competing rather than complementary interests. Presidential campaigns also are altered as candidates learn to exploit the latest technological advances. In 2000,