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## THE RONALD REAGAN GREAT COMMUNICATOR DEBATE SERIES

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**RESOLVED: The United States primary system is an ineffective method for selecting the best possible candidates for president.**

**Opinion Pieces:**

- Chapman, B. (2012, March). Debate Club: A National Primary Wouldn't Work. U.S. News. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/a-national-primary-wouldnt-work>

*A national primary day would make it harder and more expensive for all candidates to have a fair shot at competing for the nomination.*

- Cooper, A. (2008, February). The case for a national primary. The Christian Science Monitor. Retrieved from <http://www.csmonitor.com/Commentary/Opinion/2008/0211/p09s02-coop.html>

*The primary system allows early states to choose the presidential candidates and ignores the states with later primaries.*

- Davis, S. (2015, March). Sorry Iowa You Should Have To Earn the Top Primary Spot From Now On. The Federalist. <http://thefederalist.com/2015/03/18/sorry-iowa-you-should-have-to-earn-the-top-primary-spot-from-now-on/>

*States should have to compete for the privilege of hosting the first presidential contest; it should not be automatically given to Iowa.*

- Editorial (2007, September). The Primary Problem. The New York Times. Retrieved from <http://www.nytimes.com/2007/09/02/opinion/02sun1.html>

*The primary system works well for early-voting states but leaves late voters lacking candidates who advocate for issues that matter to them. Long calls for reform have not made significant changes to the system and the two parties should discuss how to implement a new system for the next election.*

- Fortier, J. C. (2012, March). The Current Primary System Promotes Deliberation. U.S. News. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/the-current-primary-system-promotes-deliberation>

*The U.S. primary system promotes candidate engagement with average citizens and a sustained national look at presidential candidates.*

- Masket, S. (2014, July). How Can We Fix the Broken Primary Election System? Pacific Standard. Retrieved from <http://www.psmag.com/politics-and-law/fixing-primaries-broken-election-voting-system-84704>

*A discussion on the Bipartisan Policy Center's research on primary reform.*

- Shumaker, T. (2012, March). Tough Primary Battles Forge More Resilient Nominees. U.S. News. Retrieved from <http://www.usnews.com/debate-club/is-a-national-primary-a-good-idea/tough-primary-battles-forge-more-resilient-nominees>

*The traditional process may be messy and unpredictable, but it produces stronger presidential nominees and allows unknown candidates a chance to enter the national platform.*

- The Editors of The Nation. (2012, January). The Nation: The Primary System Is Broken. NPR. Retrieved from <http://www.npr.org/2012/01/09/144895074/the-nation-the-primary-system-is-broken>

*The best way to fix democracy is to reform the electoral process, eliminate corporate campaign donations, help journalism hold leaders accountable, and ensure every American can vote and be counted.*

### **Peer Reviewed Articles:**

- Aldrich, J. H. and R. Michael Alvarez. (1994). Issues and the Presidential Primary Voter. Political Behavior, 16 (3), 289-317. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/586623>

*Article argues that issues do matter in presidential primary elections and that these primary campaigns are important to electing the president because information about policy priorities reaches the intended audience.*

- Aldrich, J. (2009). The Invisible Primary and Its Effects on Democratic Choice. PS: Political Science and Politics, 42 (1), 33-38. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20452370>

*Article argues that the invisible primary that occurs in the 6-12 months before the Iowa caucus undermines the democratic outcomes of a presidential nomination.*

- Cooper, A. L. (2001). Nominating Presidential Candidates: The Primary Season Compared to Two Alternatives. Political Research Quarterly, 54(4), 771–793. Retrieved from <http://doi.org/10.2307/449234>

*This article researches how the primary system would compare to both a single national primary and a national primary followed by a runoff using computer simulations. The author finds that the traditional primary best estimates party voters' preferences and selects candidates closest to the general electorate average.*

- Fraser, D. A. and Irving Bluestone. (1990). The Presidential Primary: A Faulty Process. *New England Journal of Public Policy*, 6 (2), Article 4. Retrieved from <http://scholarworks.umb.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1374&context=nejpp>

*Article states that the primary system chooses candidates based on personality, campaign spending, and media influence.*

- Hill, S. J., and That Kousser. (2015). Turning Out Unlikely Voters? A Field Experiment in the Top-Two Primary. *Political Behavior*, (Forthcoming). Retrieved from <http://www.sethjhill.com/HillKousser.pdf>

*Article examines the relationship between primary elections and candidate ideology, using a dataset of House primary and general election outcomes. This article argues that primaries pull candidates away from average district preferences.*

- Hirano, Shigeo, James M. Snyder Jr., Stephen Daniel Ansolabehere, and John Mark Hansen. 2010. Primary Elections and Partisan Polarization in the U.S. Congress. *Quarterly Journal of Political Science* 5(2): 169-191. Retrieved from <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:9949294>

*Article looks at whether primary elections contribute to ideological polarization in U.S. politics and finds that they have little or no association.*

- Meirowitz, A. (2005). Informational Party Primaries and Strategic Ambiguity. *Journal of Theoretical Politics*, 17 (1), 107-136. Retrieved from <https://www.princeton.edu/~ameirowi/published/jtp2005.pdf>

*Primary elections give voters an opportunity to share their preferences around the issues with the candidates.*

- Norrander, B.. (2006). The Attrition Game: Initial Resources, Initial Contests and the Exit of Candidates during the US Presidential Primary Season. *British Journal of Political Science*, 36(3), 487-507. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/4092259>

*This article describes how the presidential primary race most resembles a game of attrition, where a candidate's initial assets, early victories, and structural variables determine the duration of their race (as seen in presidential candidates from 1980 to 2004).*

- Serra, G. (2007). Why Primaries? The Strategic Choice of Candidate Selection Methods. Harvard University. Retrieved from <http://isites.harvard.edu/fs/docs/icb.topic248791.files/Serra2.pdf>

*Article argues that primary elections are good because they reveal the campaign skills of candidates, which increases the party's probability of winning the election.*

- Taylor, A. J. (2010). Does Presidential Primary and Caucus Order Affect Policy? Evidence from Federal Procurement Spending. *Political Research Quarterly*, 63 (2), 398-409. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/20721499>

*This article examines the idea that states with early presidential primaries receive additional federal spending promised by the candidate if the candidate who wins their state wins the election.*

- Wattenberg, M. P. (2004). "Elections": Personal Popularity in U.S. Presidential Elections. *Presidential Studies Quarterly*, 34 (1), 143-155. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27552569>

*Article suggests that the presidential election is not a personality contest, but the public's perception of candidates' stances on the issues that determines who wins an election.*

### **Books:**

- Norrander, Barbara. (2015). *The Imperfect Primary: Oddities, Biases, and Strengths of U.S. Presidential Nomination Politics*. New York: Routledge

*Pages 13-24 of this book discusses the history of the primary system and pages 70-105 discusses whether the primary system is a fair way to select a presidential nominee, including who votes in primaries and campaign finance. Pages 152-162 discuss biases and strengths of presidential nomination processes.*

### **Discussion Papers:**

- Presidential Commission on Election Administration. (January 2014). *The American Voting Experience: Report and Recommendations of the Presidential Commission on Election Administration*. Retrieved from <https://www.supportthevoter.gov/files/2014/01/Amer-Voting-Exper-final-draft-01-09-14-508.pdf>

*This discussion paper looks at ways to improve the voting experience and promote confidence in U.S. election administration. The authors have several recommendations, including improving access to polls by expanding the period for voting before the traditional election day (p. 54-58) and online voter registration.*

- U.S. Election Assistance Commission. (September 2008). *Alternative Voting Methods*. Retrieved from [http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/workflow\\_staging/Page/54.PDF](http://www.eac.gov/assets/1/workflow_staging/Page/54.PDF)

*This discussion paper looks at alternative voting methods for states. Alternatives explored include early voting, national election day holidays, and weekend voting.*

### **Websites & Data:**

- C-Span. Lesson Idea: Primaries and Caucuses. Retrieved from <http://www.c-spanclassroom.org/Lesson/659/Lesson+Idea+Primaries+and+Caucuses.aspx>
- C-Span. Primaries and Caucuses (Video). Retrieved from <http://www.c-span.org/video/?c4504411/primaries-caucuses>
- Fair Vote. Congressional and Presidential Primaries: Open, Closed, Semi-Closed, and Others. Retrieved from <http://www.fairvote.org/research-and-analysis/presidential-elections/congressional-and-presidential-primaries-open-closed-semi-closed-and-top-two/>
- Khan Academy. Primaries and Caucuses (Video). Retrieved from <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/history/American%20civics/american-civics/v/primaries-and-caucuses>
- The Washington Post. Everything you need to know about how the presidential primary works. Retrieved from <https://www.washingtonpost.com/blogs/monkey-cage/wp/2015/05/12/everything-you-need-to-know-about-how-the-presidential-primary-works/>

- United States Presidential Election Results. Retrieved from <http://uselectionatlas.org/RESULTS/index.html>
- U.S. Election Assistance Commission. (2014). Election Administration and Voting Survey. Retrieved from <http://www.eac.gov/research/default.aspx>
- Vote Smart. Government 101: United States Presidential Primary. Retrieved from <https://votesmart.org/education/presidential-primary#.VjPECZfn-Uk>