



NEW HAMPSHIRE SECRETARY OF STATE

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Rarely is a press announcement conducted in the Hall of Flags here in the New Hampshire State House. This space is sacred, and it is a memorial to those New Hampshire soldiers who have fought for freedom and democracy.

Behind me, and around the hall, are the bullet-riddled, shrapnel-torn, and blood-stained flags carried into the major battles and skirmishes of the Civil War. The New Hampshire soldiers associated with these flags fought against the worst form of oppression and they fought to preserve the union of individual states. One hundred and twenty-five of these soldiers were African American. The remaining flags and memorial rolls in the hall reflect subsequent wars to protect freedom, democracy, the individual right to vote and run for elective office. This display is a daily reminder and a testament to the character, courage, and sacrifice of New Hampshire citizens, and it is fitting just a few days after Veterans' Day that these remarks be delivered here.

New Hampshire has held the First-in-the-Nation Presidential Primary Election for over 100 years. In fact, just last Monday, I attended the funeral of Sybil Dupuis, who was the great-granddaughter of Stephen Bullock, a life-long farmer and the Democratic state representative from Richmond, NH, who authored New Hampshire's presidential primary law 110 years ago.

New Hampshire became the lead off primary in 1920 by default, and it has been first ever since. Nearly 50 years ago, former democratic state senator Jim Splaine helped protect that tradition by sponsoring the state law requiring the New Hampshire Presidential Primary be held at least 7 days before any similar event. We did not take the first-in-the-nation status from anyone, and we will vigorously defend it.

Our first-in-the-nation status is now being challenged by the Democratic National Committee due to alleged concerns over lack of racial diversity. Their pundits have claimed New Hampshire is too white, and by extension, too privileged. A couple of months ago, I heard a former chair of the DNC on a talk show ask the voters of New Hampshire if they know what it is like to live on a dirt road. The answer, of course, is yes, we do. I would add that you cannot truly appreciate a dirt road until you have experienced one during a New Hampshire mud season. Using racial diversity as a cudgel in an attempt to rearrange the presidential nominating calendar is an ugly precedent. At what point does a state become too old or too wealthy, or too educated or too religious to hold an early primary? The truth is, there is no individual state that truly reflects the make-up of America, and no state is more "American" than any other state.

With that said, diversity is not the real issue at play in this debate. At stake is who gets to determine the nominee of the party. The elites on a national party committee by controlling the nominating calendar or the voters. New Hampshire believes the voters of

each state should decide who they prefer as the nominee to be president, not power brokers in Washington DC. That is why Representative Stephen Bullock wrote New Hampshire's Presidential Primary law in the first place. In New Hampshire, candidates of different ethnic backgrounds, genders, religions, and financial means have done well here, sometimes to the dismay of the national political parties.

When the colonists fought and won their independence from Great Britain, New Hampshire crafted a state constitution that predates our federal constitution. At the time, there was a general mistrust of government and a strong sense that the citizens should govern themselves. Our state forefathers created a document that spread the power of government as broadly across the citizen population as possible. That is reflected in the 400-member House of Representatives that we have today, each of which receives a salary of \$100 per year, and a five-member executive council that acts as a check on the governor. All local election officials who run the polling places on election day are elected by their neighbors. New Hampshire government is designed from the bottom up, not the top down, and our political culture and traditions reflect that.

New Hampshire is the antithesis of a national primary, or a regional primary, or a large state primary where only the wealthy, well known, or politically anointed candidates can compete. A small state geographically, with a population of 1.4 million citizens, New Hampshire is the one place where ANY qualified United States citizen can run for president and have a shot. If you had the childhood dream of growing up to be president of the United States, you can try to make that a reality in New Hampshire. That fact, after all, is the purest form of the American Dream. Ballot access is extremely easy by filling out a one-page declaration of candidacy form and payment of a \$1,000 filing fee. If a candidate cannot afford the fee, 100 nomination signatures can be collected from around the state instead. It is far easier for most candidates to run for president in the New Hampshire Primary than it is for them to run in their home state. This state has a receptive and engaged electorate, a trait that has developed and matured over the last 100 years.

For a lesser-known candidate, being able to run in a lead-off primary is critical to their potential success. For the most part, they are serious candidates who believe they have something to offer the country, and New Hampshire voters will give them a shot.

To bring my remarks full circle, New Hampshire still represents the values and principles of the soldiers who carried these flags, and the government and political climate we have created here reflects the reason for their sacrifice and courage.

Twenty-one democrats and twenty-four republicans have filed to run in the 2024 New Hampshire Presidential Primary.

The date of the New Hampshire First-in-the-Nation Presidential Primary will be January 23, 2024. That date complies with our state statute requiring our presidential primary to be held at least 7 days before any similar event and preserves the position of the traditional Iowa Caucus.