THE BROOKINGS INSTITUTION

# FRONT-LOADING THE PRIMARIES: THE WRONG APPROACH TO PRESIDENTIAL POLITICS?

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Question & Answer Session

**P R O C E E D I N G S**

MR. NESSEN: Good morning and welcome to the Brookings Institution, and welcome to this morning's forum on the presidential primary voting season, now about to begin. The selection of actual delegates who will choose the candidates. The pre-season is over, the training camp is over, and the real thing, the real nominating process opens with the Iowa causes next Monday.

My name is Ron Nessen and I'll be the moderator for this morning's forum.

After yesterday's unofficial primary in the District of Columbia, in which no delegates were selected, and after next Monday's Iowa caucuses, the process moves very fast.

The New Hampshire primary is the following week. The primaries or caucuses in Arizona, Delaware, Missouri, New Mexico, North Dakota, Oklahoma and South Carolina are on February 3rd, and some observers believe the Democratic nominee will be determined by then, and certainly after the ten primaries on March 2nd, Super Tuesday, and that will be before the primary voters in 25 other states and territories have even voted.

This so-called front-loading of the process is the focus of our discussion this morning and the starting point of the discussion is this new book, "The Front-loading Problem in Presidential Nominations," published by the Brookings Institution press and written by William G. Mayer, down at the end, and his co-author, Andrew E. Bush.

Bill Mayer is an associate professor of political science at Northeastern University and he's going to start things off this morning by outlining the problem of front-loading the primaries.

Then Tony Corrado, a visiting fellow in the governance studies program here at Brookings, and a professor of government at Colby College, and our own Tom Mann, senior fellow, and the holder of the W. Averell Harriman chair in the governance studies program at Brookings, will offer their observations on front-loading and its effects on the current presidential campaign.

We'll have a lively discussion among our three panelists, including a discussion of possible reforms of the current primary system, and you and the audience will have an opportunity to ask the panelists questions.

Before we get started, let me say that more complete biographies of all the panelists are in the packages available at the registration desk, in case you didn't get one. A lot more information about this issue and related issues is available on the Brookings Web site at brookings.edu, and the book, "The Front-loading Problem in

Presidential Nominations" is for sale at a 20 percent discount at the bookstore just across the way here.

Now let us begin and we begin with one of the authors of that book, Bill Mayer.

MR. MAYER: Thank you very much. I'm really very pleased to be here today and especially grateful to the Brookings Institution Press for publishing our book.

As we indicate in the acknowledgements, and the "we" here is not the royal we, it's me and my co-author, from the moment we first thought about doing a book on front-loading we had hoped that we might be able to get it published with Brookings and we're enormously grateful to the press and particularly to Chris Kelaher and Janet Walker and Nicole Pagano for their kindness and their very good work.

As its title hopefully indicates, our book attempts to provide a comprehensive discussion of the front-loading issue, what it is, why it developed, what consequences it has, and what, if anything, we can do about it.

And the purpose of the talk that I'm going to give at the moment is to sort of summarize the first four chapters, and then after Tom and Tony have weighed in, I'm going to have another five minutes or so to tell you what if anything we could do about it, if you've decided by then we do need to do something about it.

So what is front-loading? Well, if you like a formal definition, the one that we provide in the book goes something like this. Front-loading is the trend in which beginning in about 1980, more and more states scheduled their primaries and caucuses near the beginning of the delegate selection season.

But a better way of conveying what front-loading is all about is to take a look at the schedule of primaries that was actually used in various nomination races, and here there was, there is a handout that you ultimately will get, but in an oversight on my part, I forgot to give them to Rob Wooley until about five minutes ago. But he's in the process of Xeroxing them right now.

Anyway, what you'll see is that the first page of this handout--it's only got two pages--is the calendar of Democratic primaries that was used in 1976, and what's noteworthy about that calendar, particularly from present-day perspective, is how slowly it started up.

The first primary held that year was in New Hampshire--some things haven't changed--but then it was on February 24th. In each of the four weeks after that just one primary was held. There were no primaries in week six. Week seven finally was the first week in which there were more than one primary, and then there was only two, but then in weeks eight and nine there weren't any primaries at all.

So the primaries calendar starts up very slowly. The bulk of the primaries occur in May and early June and what was called Super, Super--actually it was called Super Bowl Tuesday in 1976, occurred on the very last day of primaries in early June.

Compare that now to the primary schedule that the Democrats will use in 2004, which is going to be the other page of this handout. Now the action is all up front. It starts off again of course with New Hampshire and there are seven primaries in the week immediately after that.

There's a scattering of primaries in the next three weeks, and then there are nine primaries in week six and four more in week seven.

And as one way of kind of summarizing it, in 1976, of all of the delegates that were selected by primary, by the end of week six, just 19 percent had been selected by the end of week six.

In 2004, 58 percent will have been selected by the end of week six and 72 percent by the end of week seven.

So that in a nutshell is what front-loading is all about, where once the primary season started up rather slowly, now it begins very rapidly.

This is not a particularly new or sudden development, though I notice I've seen a certain amount of writing in the press suggesting that it is. Actually, signs of front-loading are visible as early as 1980 and it clearly took a quantum leap forward in both 1988 and 1996.

What I think is distinctive about front-loading is that unlike most of the other problems associated with the contemporary nomination process, front-loading probably hasn't run its course yet.

Most of the other problems have probably reached a point of stability. Front-loading I think actually, unless corrective action is taken, will probably get worse.

Why has this change taken place? Why have so many states moved up their primaries and caucuses? Well, as we say in the book, the single proximate cause of front-loading is a phenomenon that we called "New Hampshire envy."

"New Hampshire envy," as its name probably implies, is the perception that New Hampshire gets an enormous range of benefits by holding the first primary in every election cycle and that other states will benefit if they too can hold their primaries, if not exactly in the same week as New Hampshire--New Hampshire will make its best efforts to make sure that doesn't occur--then at least as close to the start of the process as possible.

In chapter two of the book, we actually detail a whole series of benefits that New Hampshire gets from holding the first primary.

They include press coverage, attention from the candidates, influence on the nomination race, economic benefits from all the candidate and media spending, and the free publicity for state businesses and resorts, and finally, what we call special policy concessions like discretionary spending and favorable bureaucratic treatment, especially from incumbent Presidents.

Of course states that hold their primaries in weeks three and five get nothing like those sorts of concentrated benefits and attention that are regularly showered on New Hampshire and of course after 1976, those same benefits started getting showered on Iowa as well.

Rob is now passing out the handout, and again, I want to say it's my fault that I didn't give it to him earlier.

Anyway, most states don't get of course--most states that go early don't get the benefits that Iowa and New Hampshire get. But what we show in chapter two is that they do benefit. At one point, for example, in the chapter, we analyze the state by state spending data that's available from Federal Election Commission reports. How much the candidates spent in various states.

And as Tony will tell you, that date is not terribly reliable but it's at least a useful indicator of how much attention the candidates are paying to the states.

And what we show is that the amount of spending a state can expect to get declines substantially the later it holds its primary or caucus. In fact it declines at the rate of about four to twelve thousand dollars a day, depending on which election cycle we're talking about.

So in 1984, to take a rather typical example, we estimate that if a state had moved up its primary by just one month, that is to say, 30 days, it could have expected about $180,000 in additional candidate spending, and if it had moved up from early June to mid March, it could have expected about a half a million dollars in additional spending.

Now to put those figures in perspective, in 1984, the typical state got only $230,000 in spending. So that's a big benefit from moving up your primary and caucus.

So front-loading, as we see it, is a classic example of what's sometimes called the tragedy of the commons. A group of autonomous actors, in this case states, pursue a course of action that's designed to make them individually better off but the aggregate effect is to make all of the states less well off.

I mention this because I've seen a fair number of articles recently, that seem to suggest that front-loading was something that was designed by Terry McAuliffe and other Democratic leaders, for the deliberate purpose of helping some favored candidate or of bringing the nomination process to a close.

And Andy and I think that that's a quite inaccurate way of looking at the whole problem. To begin with, as I've already mentioned, front-loading long predates McAuliffe's arrival on the national scene. It begins as early as 1980. It's certainly well under way by the late 1980's.

But the other thing is that I think it overestimates the capacity of any party chair to redesign his party's presidential nomination process.

I have no doubt that Terry McAuliffe wishes he had the power to announce a particular type of nomination schedule and then get 50 state parties and state legislatures to fall into line; but he doesn't.

If the states have moved to earlier dates, they've done it for their own purposes, not because he recommended it.

So what's the consequences of all this? What's the bottom line in terms of front-loading?

As we say in the book, the rules of presidential politics typically don't attract a lot of attention. They're a fairly arcane subject. But this is a case where I think the rules have come to the attention of a lot of people and the vast majority of that attention has been negative, and we think that that's in fact a justified perception, that front-loading has a number of major effects on the presidential nomination process, almost all of them unfortunate.

First of all, it greatly condenses the time that the voters have for learning about the candidates and making their decisions.

One of the most noteworthy features of the American presidential nomination process is how long it takes. With the exception of Wesley Clark, every one of the major Democratic candidates this year has been actively campaigning for at least a year.

But as a number of good studies have shown, the typical American is nowhere near as consumed by these things as political scientists and political junkies and the press are.

In fact most Americans don't really start to pay attention to the nomination race until the first real delegates are selected, which is to say just about now.

And when the primary and caucus schedule looked like it did in 1976, when it started up kind of gradually, that meant that most voters had a couple of months to learn about the major contenders, to watch them perform in the national spotlight before they made their choices.

As the system has become more front-loaded, however, the effective length of a contested nomination race has been dramatically reduced. The first event this year, as Ron said earlier, is the Iowa caucuses, which will take place on January 19th. It's quite possible that the race this year will be over by early February.

Given the right set of circumstances, it may linger on until mid March, but I find it very difficult to construct a plausible scenario as to how it could continue into April, much less May or June.

So the voters in most states will have only a couple of weeks to learn about the major presidential contenders and as a lot of evidence indicates, voters have a great deal of difficultly learning that much new information in such a short period of time.

By the time the race has been effectively decided, most voters still won't know a whole lot about the nominee, much less his defeated rivals.

What type of candidate benefits from front-loading? As we detail in the book, there's some possibility that given the right set of circumstances, front-loading could help a longshot or an insurgent candidate. But in every race to date, the evidence is pretty clear that front-loading has benefited the front-runner.

When the system was less front-loaded, candidates could concentrate their time and resources on a relatively small number of early states, and figure that if they did well there, they would then have the opportunity to organize and campaign in later state primaries.

Today, by contrast, once--every campaign has to be prepared. The moment New Hampshire is over, to run, in effect, a full-scale national campaign, to face seven primaries in the next week and thirteen more in the four weeks after that.

And almost by definition, longshots have trouble doing that. Only a candidate who is already well-known and well-financed can be prepared to campaign in so many states it wants.

As this description probably indicates, front-loading also has the effect of significantly increasing the importance of early fund-raising.

In making this argument, I should point out I'm cribbing a little bit off some very good work that Tony has done on presidential fund-raising.

When the nomination calendar is so compressed, as Tony pointed out a number of years ago, a candidate who has been having trouble raising money can no longer hope that if they do well in Iowa and New Hampshire, that those victories will allow them to raise enough money to compete in the next round of primaries and caucuses. There just isn't enough time.

So the money has to be raised up front. In each of the last three election cycles, there's been a rule of thumb that says if you want to have a serious shot at winning your party's nomination race, you have to have raised between 20- and $25 million before the Iowa caucuses, and to say the last ,lots of candidates cannot meet that threshold.

A fourth important effect of front-loading is its effect on voter participation.

Before front-loading had developed, before it had gone very far, most contested nomination races lasted at least into early June. They lasted all the way till the end of the primaries. But as the system has become more front-loaded, nomination races necessarily get decided a lot earlier.

In 1996, for example, Bob Dole had won a majority of his party's convention delegates by March 26th.

In 2000, both George Bush and Al Gore clinched their party's nomination on March 14th.

So races get settled very early these days with lots of states still to hold their primaries.

In 2000, for example, 25 states held their primaries after both Bill Bradley and John McCain had officially announced their withdrawal from the race.

Not surprisingly, this sort of situation has a major impact on voter participation.

In both 1996, and 2000, we estimate that once the nomination races were settled, voter participation rates in the Republican primaries declined by between 35 and 40 percent.

The number of other problems associated with it, that I can talk further about, but just to summarize, front-loading has become a major feature of the contemporary presidential nomination process and there's very little prospect that it will disappear any time soon, and its consequences, as I say, in the opinion of my co-author and myself, are almost entirely negative, and so if you stick around, later on, I'll tell you perhaps at least some--give you at least some sense of what, if anything, we might do about it.

MR. NESSEN: Thank you, Bill. We want to hear from Tony but let me ask one real quick question.

You said you expect this to get worse before it gets better. How can it get worse? Is it going to be like the Christmas decorations, the primaries will start the day after Thanksgiving?

MR. MAYER: Well, that's one possibility. I mean, what I'm thinking of is there are now seven primaries in the second week in the schedule, but there's only at the moment two in the third week.

If the race gets settled by mid February, I guarantee you that when we do this in 2008, there won't be two in week three. There'll be six. Or right now, California and New York have waited until the first Tuesday in March to go.

If, by the time their cast their votes, this race is settled, there will be strong pressure in both states to move up to mid February.

So the answer is it can get a lot worse, actually.

MR. NESSEN: We'll come back and talk about this later but now we're going to hear from Tony about some of the finance implications of front-loading the primary system.

MR. CORRADO: Thank you, Ron.

You know, it's hard to see how it could get worse, given the fact that we're already going to have 29 states voting before the season premiere of The Sopranos in the first week of March. I mean, for the most part, we'll have most of the country having already gone to the polls at a time when we used to just be gearing up for the final push in New Hampshire.

So it's just amazing to me how hyper-accelerated this calendar has become, and one of the things I thought I would focus on rather than some of the history or broad arguments that Bill covers so well in the book, is what we're seeing in 2004 and some of the effects and consequences of this process.

Last week, I was in South Carolina, and it gave me a glimmer of what these campaigns now face under this front-loaded process.

While I was in South Carolina, Dick Gephardt visited because there was a steel mill that had just lost 600 jobs, so you know Dick had to be there.

Carol Moseley Braun was in the state. I saw advertisements for Dean, Clark, Edwards and Gephardt, all of whom are doing fairly substantial media buys at this point before Iowa has even voted.

The candidates, in addition to Iowa and New Hampshire, are up and running on the air in South Carolina, in Arizona, in Oklahoma. In Michigan, the voting process has already begun, since Michigan is allowing mail and Internet balloting for its February 7th primary, and therefore the candidates already have an incentive to be out there, starting to get the vote out for Michigan.

And as a result, what we're seeing now is fairly active campaigning in at least six states, and we've still got a way to go before Iowa even notes its decision.

That creates an enormously burdensome process for a campaign organization and as a result, to underscore a point that Bill made, what we have done is created a process that really puts a premium on what Phil Gramm a few years ago called the politician's best friend--ready cash.

This has become a very cash-dominated system, not just a fund-raising dominated system as we use to have, but now a cash-dominated system, because the most important thing a candidate needs is lots of cash on hand that he or she is able to spend in this early stage of the process.

In fact candidates now, in addition to having to organize early in a multiple number of states, in order to meet the filing deadline, which in many cases get pushed back as the calendar gets pushed back; in order to form their delegate slates, which have always been an important part of Democratic nominating contests and which need to get done in the months of October and November and December when you're trying to recruit prominent people to be on your delegate slates; and in addition to wooing the super delegates and getting endorsements from state and local politicians now have to be up and running on the air long before any traditional period.

It used to be the case, I remember when I was still doing a lot of presidential politics back in the '80s, that you generally thought that it was a waste of money to be on television during that Thanksgiving-Christmas period because no one was really focusing on what you were doing.

They were busy with the holidays and January 1st was really the time where you started to move into your big media buys and got ready for the early February events.

What we now see is a completely different process in which candidates, particularly prospective front-runners, have to start spending money on television early, both to try to increase their name recognition and boost their poll ratings, which is one of the few objective mechanisms that you have for judging candidates in the pre-election

year, and in order to start to build the firewall in case something goes wrong in Iowa and New Hampshire and you need to come back in South Carolina.

This used to be, in the last couple of elections, a traditional Republican strategic need, where you always knew that South Carolina was going to be big. Well, now it's become a Democratic strategic need as well, and as a result we're seeing lots more spending early in the race, and much greater demands on fund-raising.

You see this reflected in the Democratic fundraising success. We have this extraordinary amount of money that Howard Dean has raised, $40 million through year end, more than any other Democrat has ever managed in the pre-election year, even when you adjust it for the higher contribution limits.

But look at the rest of the field. It's incredibly financially strong. You've got Kerry, Gephardt and Edwards, who, with their first matching check on January 1st, have all passed the $20 million threshold. Clark and Lieberman are above the $15 million threshold.

So there's lots of money being raised. Not much in comparison to the "king of fund-raising," George Bush, who's $131 million has not only shown him to continue to hold the crown as king of fund-raising, but shows how he has become the principal beneficiary of the new campaign finance law, in that he has already received over 44,000 $2000 contributions, giving him $88 million.

In the last election cycle, he had about 59,000 plus maximum donors who gave him $60 million. So he is already $28 million ahead on his maximum donors and it seems to me that they're just kind of "hitting their stride."

What this means is that candidates not only have to focus a lot on fund-raising, but they also see the cash go out the door very quickly.

In fact one of the things about this process is that it is incredibly money-intensive at the front end. Any well-funded candidate is going to be budgeting at least $4 million in Iowa alone. They're going to be budgeting $2 million in New Hampshire.

So that's $6 million that they're going to be spending, at a minimum, just in those two states.

With candidates now opting out of the public financing system, that drives up the costs even more. In Iowa, Howard Dean will spend at least an estimated $2.5 million on television alone. That is more than any candidate has ever spent on the air in Iowa. Even Stephen Forbes, in his most profligate spending days, back when he was spending his own money, did not spend this much.

Kerry is looking at $1.9 million on the air in Iowa. Gephardt and Edwards are both spending more than a million. So much for the notion that Iowa has

quaint rural caucuses where people meet face to face, and you don't have to rely on television ads in order to get out your vote.

This trend towards early advertising has been so pronounced, I would make note of just one more point.

If you look at the top 75 media markets, the Democratic candidates had aired already 12,700 spots by the beginning of December. So much for the notion that we should wait until after the Christmas rush to take to the air.

That has increased the financial demands and created a situation in which front-loading has heightened the importance of the first real primary in my view, the money primary, and what we're seeing is ever more attention being given to how much money candidates raise as one of their principal objective measures of success in the year leading up to the election.

No longer do we wait for the year-end reports to see how the candidates were doing. It's now gotten to the point where the midyear report in the year before the election, and even the first quarter report, is a matter of enormous attention that can help launch a candidacy.

And we saw that this year with Howard Dean. While the anti-war message, insurgent candidacy of Dean received some commentary and attention in the early part of last year, what really spurred the movement towards giving greater media coverage to Howard Dean and what really helped to give flight to his candidacy was when he indicated, at midyear, that he had already raised about $10 million, and suddenly people started to realize that this guy was raising presidential level money and was going to be competitive. That generated an enormous amount of increased attention to his campaign, which fueled further momentum towards his fund-raising efforts, and conversely, helped to really sink some of the prospects of Joe Lieberman, who was shown by the first quarter, to not be matching up in terms of fund-raising, and by June, it was very clear that he was not keeping pace and quickly people started to question whether or not he was going to really be a viable candidate.

One problem this has created is that it has exacerbated the broader problem of the collapse of the presidential public funding system. Given the amount of early campaigning that's now needed, every candidate has to face the real possibility that they're not going to be able to conduct a campaign, for the length of the campaign, under the current spending limits.

What we have seen is a massive disjunction between the presidential campaign finance rules and the delegate selection rules, because the rules of campaign fund-raising and the rules of campaign presidential public funding were not conceived to be applied to such a hyper-accelerated process.

As a result, candidates now face the prospect, even in the best case, that they will be the nominee and not be able to spend money for months prior to the convention.

As a result, candidates are increasingly forced to confront the issue of whether or not they can participate in the system. And first Bush, and now Dean and Kerry, have taken as a solution to that problem the decision to opt out of the public funding program and be able to spend freely in the first stage and hope that they will do well, survive the winnowing process in Iowa and New Hampshire and be able to raise more money later, and be able to raise and spend money right through to the conventions.

This solution augers, in the future, a bifurcated field. A bifurcated field in the sense that we are going to be seeing more and more privately-funded candidates, and less importance given to publicly-funded candidates. Because what the Howard Dean lesson will be for Democrats and what the John Kerry lesson will be for Democrats is the lesson that future Republicans have already drawn from George Bush, which is that you're better off trying to raise as much money as possible in the year before the election, so that you can have enough cash on hand to be able to forego the public matching fund payment that comes on January 1st, still be able to pay for all of your television and campaigning in the front end of the process, and be able to offer yourself the prospect of raising an unlimited amount of money and spending money during the election year.

And as a result, we have to wait to see how many candidates are going to be able to pull that strategy off.

But with higher contribution limits that will be indexed for inflation, and the potential of the Internet as a fund-raising tool, many candidates are going to try to mimic the Howard Dean/George Bush models, and as a result, you're likely to see a system in 2008, where only those candidates who are less well-known, only candidates who lack broad fund-raising bases, are willing to abide by the presidential public funding system. I think we're therefore seeing the final throes of a process of de-legitimizing the presidential public funding system in the presidential primary process, most of which is attendant to the advent of front-loading.

The final point I would make is just to highlight a point that Bill made, and relate it more to the history of these party reform movements.

As many of you in the room will recall, when this whole party reform movement began in the Democratic party, the idea was to promote two basic principles: full and meaningful participation of the party membership and a system that would fairly reflect the preferences of a majority of the party voters in the primaries and caucuses.

The idea was to create a process that would encourage participation and promote representation. What we have seen as a result of front-loading is a process that

is wholly antithetical to those two goals, because we have a process now, that in the best case, will disenfranchise the voters in at least a third of the states because the die is already cast long before they ever got to the polls.

It's a process in which you no longer get an effort to broaden participation, but, rather, a contest that pushes towards early closure. Even if we get a split decision in Iowa and New Hampshire in February, in this year, and even if we get a split on February 3rd, with perhaps one candidate winning South Carolina, another winning Oklahoma, I think you are still in a process in which this race does not go beyond March 2nd, which means that if you do get attention of voters who start to get encouraged by this competition in the Democratic race and start to focus on the candidates, the race is over just as they're getting engaged and interested in the process.

That's what happened in 2000. McCain's win in New Hampshire created an enormous amount of interest in the presidential race and people started to get interested in what was going on with Bush and McCain, and just as they were starting to get interested, it was just as quickly over, leaving them kind of hanging for the next episode, in a way, kind of like The Sopranos, leaving them to wait until years later for the next episode, to continue seeing what happens.

And as a result, I think that creates a real problem, and the problem is that despite what people may say about front-runners or insurgents, this is a process that has now created a favoritism towards brushfire candidates.

If you're a candidate who can kind of "catch fire," maybe coming out of New Hampshire, ala a Gary Hart in 1984, this is a process that is made for you, because you have the option of riding a wave of momentum and national press coverage that will not crest until the nomination may be, for all intents and purposes, sewn up.

Because there is so little time in this process, after New Hampshire, to reassess a candidacy, for other candidates to reorient their strategies to a new front-runner, and to redesign their campaign war chest, that you're really in a position where there is little opportunity for voters to learn more about that candidate and little opportunity to provide a second look.

You have to remember, in 1984, when Gary Hart "caught fire" coming out of New Hampshire, it took Walter Mondale five weeks to come up with a strategy that finally slowed Hart down.

In this campaign, five weeks, the race will be over, and therefore, you know, it's really a process that creates more uncertainty, in some ways, and certainly discredits voter deliberation in the process, which I don't think is necessarily healthy for the sense of our Democratic system.

MR. NESSEN: Tony, thank you, and that is a very good transition I think to Tom Mann, who's going to talk about how the costs and consequences of this

front-loading system, which we've heard about, may affect the specific Democratic candidates in this year's race.

MR. MANN: Thank you, Ron. I was wondering how Tony was going to get back to The Sopranos. That was impressive.

Let me say, initially, this is a wonderful book. Congratulations to Bill and to Andy. For me, it was a bit nostalgic. Many, many years ago, I participated in a couple of Democratic presidential nominating process commissions, initially the Winograd, then the Hunt Commission, and in the early '80s, I wrote a very frantic memo to Governor Hunt about the new problem of front-loading, and the risk associated with it, and how it was worth the commission considering creating incentives for states to stay back in the calendar.

You can see how effective that memo was. I mean, I worried at that time, both about creating a front-runner advantage, but also about the possibility of this outsider, insurgent candidate who surprisingly wins early events in Iowa and New Hampshire and then, on the basis of momentum, garners the nomination before anyone has had an opportunity to reflect on the wisdom of that candidacy.

Bill suggests it's the former that's been more prominent. Tony reminds us that the brushfire candidacy is still a possibility.

Let me say one other thing that is actually in the book, but to make clear what Terry McAuliffe's contribution to front-loading is. This process, as Bill says, has been underway for a long time. But McAuliffe did one thing for this calendar. In 2000, after Iowa and New Hampshire had moved their events much earlier than had been traditional, there was a long period of time in which, I think it was five weeks, in which there was no Democratic event but there were a number of Republican events, which meant Republicans had compete control of, if you will, the public attention.

McAuliffe urged the DNC to change the definition of the beginning of a window for events, other than Iowa and New Hampshire, to the first Tuesday in February instead of in March, and that then led to some further front-loading of the process.

The idea was not to pick a particular candidate but to deal with the problem relative to the Republicans.

We have thus far focused very much on the calendar of events, beginning with the Iowa caucuses, and presumably concluding with the party conventions, because, after all, this is ultimately about winning delegates who cast their ballots at the party convention and determine the nominee.

What's important to remind ourselves, of course, is that the calendar is as critical for what it prompts candidates to do before than as to what actually occurs during the active caucus and primary season itself.

We've all now become used to using the term "the invisible primary," the year before the Iowa caucuses and New Hampshire primaries, and it turns out that invisible primary is exceedingly important.

As Bill notes, in some cases, the winner of the invisible primary is easily identified at the beginning of that year, because he is a major figure in the party whose, quote, "time has come," if it be a Bob Dole, or somebody who, as the sitting Vice President, has an enormous advantage in this process. But nonetheless, the activities of the candidates during that year—and in raising money and organizing in Iowa and New Hampshire, in garnering party endorsements, in trying out campaign themes and messages that seem to resonate with broader audiences, and garnering respect from various gatekeepers in the process—they're all exceedingly important and of course all the more so in this current election season.

I think it's worth reminding ourselves that it's still the case that the best predictor of who wins the nomination, since 1980, has been, believe it or not, not "the polls" alone, not "the money," but really sophisticated measures of party endorsements, of the major players in the Democratic and Republican Party who are making judgments about candidates during this invisible primary year.

Now let's translate this to 2004. It's not very easy to do. Let me just say this is an extraordinarily unusual, and I would argue, unprecedented year.

Here we have Howard Dean, the longshot insurgent candidate, who over the course of the invisible primary managed to move from longshot outsider to front-runner candidate, based on the very things that Tony and Bill have talked about, certainly, importantly his ability to raise money, but also his early success in attracting volunteers and in moving up in polls taken in the early events and in Iowa and New Hampshire.

It was really quite a remarkable achievement, and yet Howard Dean also attracted extraordinary endorsements from the candidate who won the popular vote in the last presidential election, Al Gore; from his primary challenger for the Democratic nomination, Bill Bradley; from the most popular Democratic politician in Iowa, Tom Harkin; and maybe we will see if former President Jimmy Carter has a laying-on of the hands in Plains over the weekend. At the very least, there will be kind words spoken.

And yet Dean is in no way in a commanding position with Democratic identifiers around the country. He has a lead in the national polls, but I don't believe he's ever exceeded 26 percent in any of--

MR. MAYER: One poll.

MR. MANN: There was one that was slightly higher. His--

MR. MAYER: Could have been sampling error, incidentally.

MR. MANN: Yeah. Early on, by the way, he was, at best, tied with a bunch of other candidates. He fell behind Clark as soon as Clark's candidacy was announced. Then when Clark stumbled, he moved ahead, and now that has closed again, and he has a very modest lead in the national polls. While he has now moved ahead of Dick Gephardt in terms of attracting members of Congress to endorse his candidacy and has more members of the black and Hispanic caucus than others and has a lead among superdelegates, again, he does not have an overwhelming lead.

It's a modest lead. And now what we've seen is after his ability to withstand the withering scrutiny of Tim Russert and Adam Nagourney, from the sort of Washington press corps, and see his supporters mobilized and activated and reinforced in their commitment to him, he's now sustained much more widespread criticism from his Democratic colleagues and much more intensive scrutiny from the press that has begun to soften his support.

The latest numbers out of New Hampshire, in the last three days, show almost a precipitous drop in his lead over General Clark, suggesting we shouldn't be surprised, in a day or two, to see Clark move ahead in the New Hampshire polls.

We're also led to believe that the Iowa caucuses have become much more competitive, in the sense that there are four candidates seriously competing for delegates there.

The mystery is if John Edwards, who many of us had expected a year ago to be a much stronger candidate than he turned out to be, has finally found his, gotten his stride—if he has the capacity to sort of move up and surprise, who will he take from and will that then create the dynamics in which the winner of the invisible primary, who almost inevitably goes on to win the nomination, is slowed in the early two events, turning this into a much more interesting and competitive contest?

I mean, that is the question and I suppose the way I would put it relative to Bill's book is: What does a front-loaded calendar allow and preclude in 2004, given the unusual circumstances of the candidates and what they have done during the year of the invisible primary?

There is no question but that I agree with Bill and Tony, that most Democrats around the country still don't know very much about the Democratic candidates. In fact, it's breathtaking how little information they have.

We, in Washington, a hotbed of attention to the race, presumably know a lot, but we're not normal people. Normal people haven't really focused on this race, and

it's stunning what little bits of information they have. That's why we really rely on intermediaries in the process.

Remember, before the reforms took place, before any front-loading, we had primaries not to select delegates but as a testing ground so that party elites could have more information on which to judge the viability of different candidates.

In a sense, we still have that process, in fact, even though the formal rules say the delegates are selected via these formal events of primaries and caucuses.

So given the fact that the public knows relatively little, that Howard Dean sort of resonated with Democrats' anger at George Bush and unhappiness with the supineness of the Democrat opposition in Washington, will that now be sufficient, given what he's managed to do on the money side and the organization side, to carry him through this front-loaded calendar?

Or, in fact, is there enough room in this process for other candidacies to emerge and for the outcome of this race to be quite uncertain?

Frankly, I don't see--and to take some exception to my colleagues--I don't see how this race wraps up early unless Dean is the victor. Howard Dean has raised $41 million. If he is edged out in Iowa and edged out in New Hampshire, I do not expect a concession speech from Howard Dean. He has substantial campaigns underway on events scheduled throughout the month of February.

It's possible his candidacy will utterly collapse and his money will dry up, but I kind of doubt it. I'm guessing he will stay in this contest. If Edwards surprises and emerges to live to New Hampshire, to the South Carolina primary, and wins there and raises some more money and stays in the race, and if Clark wins New Hampshire and stays in the race, you have the potential of three candidates. I suppose there's always the possibility of Senator Kerry, who's made some headway in Iowa, although not yet in New Hampshire, of coming back to life and selling some more real estate or taking out some more mortgages and keeping in the race.

If that happens, it is at least possible that we will go through to Super Tuesday on March 2nd and not have a clear nominee, because my view is that Howard Dean has the resources and the incentive, and just the orneriness to stay in the race and make it a contest, even if he falters in the early going.

Now is this going to give us, then, an opportunity for voters and politicians to take a measured view of the candidacies, of how good a president would each of these candidates make, of how strong might they be in the election?

I don't know. This isn't a calendar I would construct to engage in that kind of activity. But you know something? We may get lucky. It may still permit such an assessment to take place.

Frankly, it's happening now, to some extent. Finally, John Edwards and John Kerry have gotten their opportunity to try to frame a message that now is attracting some attention.

General Clark has moved up dramatically in New Hampshire, in part, as Tony suggested to me, because he's run a biographical ad, very much like the one Bill Clinton did so successfully in New Hampshire back in 1992.

At least in those couple of states, voters are beginning, and caucus participants are beginning, to take a look, to consider alternatives. That, in turn, may keep the race open to allow similar kinds of activities and serious considerations to occur throughout the month of February, leading into March, and then absent a candidate absolutely putting everyone else away, it makes for a very interesting race. Now final point.

This is where the money comes back. Tony's subject is so critically important. If it's the case that they tend to be bunched—some win here, some win there—it's going to be very difficult, over the long haul, for the candidates who have opted into the public financing system, to be able to compete throughout a lengthy struggle for the nomination. And if one of them wins the nomination, he will be at a distinct disadvantage vis-a-vis President Bush in that long period after the nominee is known and before the party conventions and the beginning of public financing.

So, on the one hand, some Democrats may feel they are doing themselves an advantage by looking hard at Howard Dean and by anticipating some of the potential problems he might have in a general election.

At the same time, in so doing, they could pick a candidate who is at an enormous financial disadvantage in the months before the party conventions.

We shall see. Stay tuned.

MR. NESSEN: Thank you, Tom.

We're going to come back to Bill in just a moment to raise some ideas of how to reform the front-loaded system.

Let me ask you, Tom, and Bill and Tony can also jump in, which specific Democratic candidates have been hurt or helped this year by the front-loaded system?

MR. MANN: Which candidates have been helped or hurt? First of all, I suppose because of the premium on early fund-raising, candidates unable to raise money apart from demonstrating some electoral viability in a formal event, would be discouraged from running.

So you might say the field was narrowed as people looked to see what that process would entail in 2003, and I can't, off the top of my head, identify individuals who might have fit in that category, but certainly those are considerations. I'd say, secondly, Joe Lieberman has probably been hurt by the particular scheduling of events of Iowa and New Hampshire, where his message simply does not resonate.

But I would say that's probably a broader problem that he would have encountered, given any kind of calendar in the process. There's not much of a market among Democrats—primary voters and caucus participants—for the message and the tone that Joe Lieberman is selling.

Tony? Bill?

MR. CORRADO: Well, it seems to me you'd have to make the case that Dean is helped by this calendar, not just because of his success but by having New Hampshire early, he has a very comparable neighbor state, where he already had a profile and where it was easy to campaign on the cheap, and he has a constituency very similar to his constituency in Vermont.

I think you would also make the case that Dean may be helped by this calendar ,given Michigan's decision to go to a mail Internet system, which should help him, if he takes advantage of the opportunity, build a firewall in Michigan, in case things don't go as well as he would hope in the early winnowing.

I think that you could also make the argument that there is a real benefit to General Clark by this calendar, because you have so many states that were aligned the week after New Hampshire, he could pursue the McCain strategy of bypassing Iowa, focus on New Hampshire and try to be able to do well there and move right into six states, a number of which should be more favorable to his candidacy than many of the Northeast or Rust Belt industrial states.

So that in terms of the positioning of Clark's candidacy, there is a real logic to this calendar, where he's going to have somewhat more conservative Democrats in Arizona, Oklahoma, and South Carolina, that should be more open to the particular message that he is giving, and also creates an opportunity for him to focus resources on New Hampshire as he's done, I think very effectively, to put himself in a posture to maybe come out as a major alternative to Dean.

So I think in some ways the two nontraditional candidates have been helped by this particular calendar in ways that the more traditional candidates were not.

MR. MAYER: I mean, my general take on what kind of candidate is helped, that we take in the book, is up till now it is almost always advantage the front-runner, but we do say that there is clearly this possibility that it could advantage a, what Tony--I never heard the phrase before but I assure you I will crib it a lot now in the future--a "brushfire candidate," which I think aptly conveys, and, you know, which

candidate will be helped this time around? You know, talk to me in four weeks and I'll tell you.

The more important point, though, is in either scenario, what's essential is it ends too soon and there isn't time for more extended discussion and deliberation. You know, even if, to pursue the scenario you talked about Tom, you know, there's a mixed verdict, maybe Dean is hurt in Iowa and New Hampshire, maybe it goes a couple of weeks longer, but even under your scenario it ends by mid March.

MR. MAYER: It won't last till April. I mean, I'd be very surprised if it lasted until April.

MR. MANN: I mean, I think the odds are with you, but there is a possibility, if you keep more than two candidates in the race--if more than two can stay in the race and the verdicts are divided, and Dean compensates for early losses with larger funding and organization, but, say, Clark and Edwards manage to stay viable—then you could get through Super Tuesday, March 2nd, with a divided verdict. And then, what's the incentive for a candidate, for two candidates to withdraw and say, oh, you're ahead even though you only have 30 percent of the delegates, not fifty? What's the incentive for staying out?

Then the question becomes: Do superdelegates, rather than playing their traditional role of following the voters in the early primaries and caucus participants—do they then say, well, this is a time that we ought to sort of deliberate and consider what might be our strongest ticket?

Listen, I'm not predicting this, Bill. I think the odds, in recent experience, suggest an early closure on the process.

What I'm saying is this has been a very unusual year. We have never had an insurgent become a front-runner before the Iowa caucuses, and therefore, we ought to at least acknowledge the possibility of further departures from recent historical experience.

MR. CORRADO: If I could refine your point, I think the one thing we will definitely see this year is that the question is really becoming not so much who wins Iowa and New Hampshire. I think the question is becoming who survives February 3rd? because you're going to have a lot of candidates in play on February 3rd.

The press corps will give John Edwards a pass to see how he does in Carolina on February 3rd. Gephardt's clearly going to want to stay in to compete in Missouri on the 3rd. You're certainly going to have General Clark in on the 3rd. Dean is clearly going to be in on the 3rd.

So the real question becomes: Does February 3rd become the winnowing moment? and within that, it seems to me that the core question in Iowa and New

Hampshire is almost a secondary, Who finishes first?, but most important is: Who's on third? Because it seems that what you have in Iowa and New Hampshire, a shaping up of a real Kerry-Edwards battle, where it's really become competitive.

We're all clear that it's going to be probably Dean or Gephardt, first, second, in Iowa, one, two, two, one. Who gets the third slot, to try to be able to build some rationale for continuing some momentum in New Hampshire?

If Kerry misses the third slot in Iowa, I think he's clearly a third slot in New Hampshire and risks falling to fourth, and I think that essentially ends any prospect for Kerry.

So is it Kerry or Edwards who can really come out of Iowa and New Hampshire to join Dean and Clark?

I think that if Gephardt wins Iowa, he's clearly going to want to stay in for Missouri on the 3rd and start to look at where's the second place I do well on the 3rd so I can claim two W's on February 3rd.

So you have the possibility of a number of candidates moving out of February 3rd and the real question will be the old question that always used to be asked in New Hampshire, will the anti front-runner vote coalesce?

Howard Dean is leading in the polls in New Hampshire. I haven't yet seen Howard Dean over forty. It reminds me of the old days with Walter Mondale, where we never went over thirty-nine in New Hampshire, which meant there was always 61 percent of the vote against us in New Hampshire, which is a good thing in a seven candidate field, but if that 61 percent decides on somebody else and starts to coalesce, your 39 percent doesn't look so good as a big defeat in the New York Times the next morning.

And one of the questions is how does this vote coalesce, if Dean holds his base and it looks like he's got a fairly strong base amongst his supporters, you know, does a Clark or Edwards emerge as a candidate who can kind a coalesce the center, versus a Dean, and draw a starker polarization between liberal Democratic voters and the more moderate types of Democrats and Independents that you can see in some of these states that vote on February 3rd?

If that dynamic emerges ,then I think this starts to get wrapped up fairly quickly because you start getting down to two realistic candidates.

And the one point I would make to Tom's 30 percent is that if a candidate has 30 percent of the delegates, that means that they start to develop a compelling rationale in the Democratic Party that they're going to be the nominee.

Because one other aspect of this front-loaded process is that the Democrats all have proportional representation of delegates, which starts to make it very difficult in these states to catch up, when you start to fall behind by a big gap in the delegate count.

This is not the Republican Party where you have winner take all and you can win chunks. This is a party where even in those states where you're finishing second, you get a chunk of the delegation, and what candidates really want to do is get to the point where they can start to argue the math.

That's what Walter Mondale did in '84. That's what Michael Dukakis did in '88, and that's one of the dynamics you're likely to see, very quickly in early March, if Tom's scenario holds true, which is what would compel a movement, as Bill noted, towards a mid March closure.

MR. NESSEN: We ought to remind ourselves that the winner of New Hampshire doesn't always win the nomination. The great names of the last half century who won in New Hampshire and didn't win the nomination were Estes, Kefauver, Henry Cabot Lodge, Ed Muskie, Gary Hart, Paul Tsongas, Pat Buchanan and John McCain.

MR. MAYER: Buchanan di--oh, no--

MR. MANN: In '96 he did.

MR. NESSEN: We want to really save a couple of minutes--we want to save time for the audience questions. So I think what we'll do, Bill, is if you will take a couple a minutes to outline some reform ideas for the front-loading problem, and then we need to save time for the audience.

MR. MAYER: Let me just dispose of it in a minute or two.

I mean the question that a lot of this discussion begs is, so, okay, you don't like front-loading, what do you do about it? and the short answer--for an extended answer, go across the hall and buy the book.

The short answer is it's a tough nut to crack. It is difficult to come up with an easy way of solving it, and there's sort of two different questions.

One is what kind of rules--what do we do? What rules changes would you adopt? And we talk about two different approaches to it in the book.

One is incremental. Can we make small changes in the existing rules, that might allow us to deal a little bit better with front-loading?

For example, maybe we could change the campaign finance laws so more candidates could raise money, or, you know, the matching fund ratio, or something like that.

And, you know, you can say that it might help candidates cope with things a little bit better, but I don't think--the good news about incremental changes is they're going to be safe, they're not going to have disastrous, unanticipated consequences.

The bad news is they're probably not going to be potent enough to really change the fundamental dynamics of the process.

So that leaves the thought maybe of a comprehensive approach and we talk about a number of major proposals of that kind, national primaries, a system of regional primaries, what's called a national pre-primary convention ,where you'd hold the convention first and then a national primary among the top finishers in that.

The Delaware plan which the Republicans almost came close to adopting in 2000. And we're not terribly impressed with any of them.

All of them have some significant problems. Lots of them might not deal with the fundamental problems that we've just criticized with regards to front-loading.

So on the one hand, it's tough to figure out what you do. But the other part of this, that I don't think has been given enough attention, is after you've got your ideal solution in mind, who is it that is going to actually create and enforce the proposal?

How do you implement the reform? And it's one of the problems with the presidential nomination process, is that the rule, what we call the rules, are set by so many different agencies in such a kind of a fragmented system, that when you want to turn around and reform it, it's not as though there's one agency you can go to.

We talk about a number of possibilities in the book. One of them, for example, is federal legislation. A lot of bills, hundreds, in fact, literally, have been introduced to create national primaries or systems of regional primaries. We say two things about that. One is that federal legislation is likely to be a bit inflexible, rigid, at a time when I think we ought to be flexible.

The other question we raise is it's not at all clear that federal legislation in this area would be constitutional.

There's certainly nothing like the Supreme Court precedent that clearly upholds it. We in fact come out in the book and say it probably isn't constitutional.

That leaves the national parties as probably the other major agency. Now the national parties, according to a number of Supreme Court decisions clearly do have

the power to create their own rules for governing the national convention. The Supreme Court gives them really quite sweeping powers in that regard.

The question with regard to the national parties is: Do they have the will, the political capacity to get the states to go along with whatever plans they propose?

The national parties basically have just one enforcement mechanism when they put together a plan, and that is that if a party--I'm sorry--if a state selects its delegates in a way that the national party feels violate its national rules, the party can refuse to seat those delegates at the convention.

Well, that's a pretty blunt mechanism. You know, would any state--would either national party even consider not seating the California delegation at its national convention on the grounds that they'd held their primary on the wrong day?

Or to take another quite specific example of it, which we discuss in the book. In 1984, it's a much more complicated story, but basically Iowa and New Hampshire wanted to hold their primary and caucus, respectively, a week earlier than the national party rules permitted, and the national party said no, you cannot do this, we're going to draw the line here.

And Iowa and New Hampshire turned to the candidates and said: Here's a letter, we want you to sign it, that says you will participate in our event and not the national party's event, and of course the candidates all sat there and thought for about ten seconds and said I can sign this and maybe win, or I can not sign it and lose. They all signed.

Bottom line was New Hampshire and Iowa held their primary and caucus in violation of what was then the party rules and the delegates were seated at the convention anyway.

So you get a sense that it's tough to find a solution and tough to implement it, and the one thing we kind of do recommend in the end about this whole process is that if you're going to solve it, it probably will require joint action on the part of the Republican and Democratic Parties.

That is to say, the Democrats and Republicans have lots of divergences in their rules that are perfectly fine.

You know, if the one wants to effectively have a quota system on gender, which the Democrats do, the Republicans don't, you can live with that. But the parties probably ought to have something like the same calendar. If they don't, it can create a great deal of mischief for both sides.

So that's the two minute summary of chapters five and six.

MR. NESSEN: Well, let's take some questions now from the audience.

Yes, sir? I'm sorry. Wait for the microphone, stand up, give your name, and ask your question.

QUESTION: James Rosen, McClatchy Newspapers. I guess I'm ultimately not really persuaded by the arguments against front-loading, mainly because I don't completely understand them, and it seems like you all are a bit all over the map. You know, some of you are talking about advantages for front-runners; others are talking about brushfire candidates like McCain, but then McCain didn't win.

And so I guess I end up thinking, well, what exactly is the problem? I mean, in terms of it being over soon, that's true, but it's also starting a lot earlier, and, you know, there is, it seems to me, very intensive engagement for a long period of time with the Democratic voters in a half dozen or more states, been going on for a long time.

Most of these candidates have made dozens and dozens and dozens of visits. So you can't argue that the voters in those states, at least large numbers of them, are not engaged.

And so I guess, you know, to me, in some ways this reflects cultural changes tied to technology, 24/7 news coverage. We're all Google-ing, we're getting information very fast. We're using Tivo to watch three TV shows simultaneously.

MR. NESSEN: Do you have a question?

QUESTION: My question is what, in the end, is really wrong with front-loading? You know, you mentioned the money situation. I guess I don't see what's wrong with Howard Dean having this mass fund-raising organization or movement he's set up, and raising tons of money from lots and lots of Democrats.

So if you could focus in and tell me what's wrong, specifically, with the front-loading system, I'd appreciate it.

MR. MANN: To the extent that one believes that presidential nominations should be determined in substantial part by engagement with Democratic identifiers, voters, and caucus participants, then this front-loaded system has failed, in the sense that while such voters and participants in a handful of states are engaged, for the most part, the process is over, candidates have withdrawn before most of the events take place.

Now that may not bother you and that's fine, but that was one of the specific objectives of the reformed system.

Now my own personal belief is I'm more attracted to the old mix system where politicians have a hand, and the public weighs in not to determine precisely which

number of delegates support which candidates, but to test these candidates and to allow other political activists and elites to get a reading from ordinary citizens around the country.

But I do believe the system is relatively inflexible and doesn't give the politicians and the public a long enough period to test in an active phase.

You're right that the invisible primary substitutes, in large part, for that, but it's one of these cases where, like the campaign finance system, pre-BCRA, the rules say one thing, but the reality is something very different.

MR. NESSEN: And Andy Kohut poll, as late as last fall, when you asked people, Have you heard of John Edwards or John Kerry, an amazingly large number at that point had not even heard, in a nationwide poll--

MR. MANN: It's still pretty high, it's still pretty high. In fact even in the February 3rd events, it is striking what little knowledge there is of the candidates. So I think it's fair to say that the Democratic electorate has not yet been engaged.

MR. MAYER: Yeah. If you're comfortable with a system where the presidential candidates are picked, to a large extent, by voters in two states, then you've got what you like here.

QUESTION: [inaudible].

MR. MAYER: Well, let me--but in terms of what you specifically, your question about are the voters--yes, they are in Iowa and New Hampshire. The problem is the other forty-eight.

Now the voters in those, at least some of those other forty-eight, will get a voice in this process.

But then you get to this problem that both Tony and I have talked about, that they will have to learn about the candidates in a very, very short period of time, and the evidence, it seems to me, is that they will not learn as much as they probably need, as much as they would like, as much as they would if the system started up more slowly.

MR. NESSEN: Other questions?

Yes, sir? Wait for the mike to get to you.

QUESTION: To my knowledge, no candidate for the President has ever said let's skip Iowa and New Hampshire, and go on to more numerous states. Why is that not a good strategy, to just in fact say I'm going to leave the lead-off man here?

MR. CORRADO: Actually, Gephardt tried that strategy in 1988. He said I'm going to focus on the South. I'm not going to focus on Iowa and--

MR. MAYER: You mean Gore.

MR. CORRADO: Gore. And it proved to be a failed strategy. You miss so much attention and media coverage by opting out of both Iowa and New Hampshire. It literally makes it impossible to try to jump-start a candidacy once those states have voted.

MR. MAYER: Candidates have tried it and they've never even come close to making it work, is the short answer.

MR. NESSEN: Other questions?

Yes, sir?

QUESTION: Graham Dodds, Brookings research fellow. In terms of ameliorating the problems of front-loading, I'm curious about something which came up in terms of the electoral college in 2000, namely, how bound are delegates? If some delegates were not fully bound to support at the national convention the candidate they had pledged to support after their state's primaries, then that would facilitate at least some deliberation or the potential for change should the political circumstances change between the primaries and the convention.

Is this a matter of state law? Does the DNC set this, and what are the prospects for change?

MR. CORRADO: It's actually a matter of party rules. The Democrats, in 1980, had a binding rule, that you would be bound to the candidate preference into which you were chosen, in order to ensure that the convention represented the delegates selected in the states.

That led to a movement to undo the binding rule, so that delegates--

MR. MANN: Free the Carter 2000--

[Laughter.]

MR. MAYER: Robot delegate.

MR. CORRADO: Which I spent a year ensuring should not be done, and then they ended up freeing the Carter 2000 after we renominated Carter, and so technically, you are not bound, and the way the candidates have responded to that is you're very careful in slating delegates to make sure that you have very loyal supporters, and to ensure that they adhere to the candidate's positions right through the convention.

That's largely the task of the delegation operations a nominee will set up between the end of the primaries and convention, to make sure everyone is in line and in place.

MR. MAYER: The Republican rules are a little more, at least as I read them, ambiguous. There's never been a similar confrontation on this. But the bottom line is the types of people who are selected as delegates, these days, are not very well suited for deliberated. I don't mean that in terms of their intellectual capacity. I just mean they are recruited because they're candidate loyalists, and, you know, who would they deliberate on behalf of? And so even--I mean, I always felt, you know, that the Kennedy fight over FC-3, which was the specific sub provision, was one of the great--you know, I mean it was a way of allowing him to pretend he was still competing all the way up to the end of the convention--or to the beginning of the convention but, you know, there was--even if the rule hadn't been there, he wasn't going to win too many delegates.

MR. MANN: There is, on the Democratic side, of course, a category of delegate that is in a position to do the precise kind of deliberation that you've suggested: the superdelegates, who now constitute about 19 percent of the delegates at the party convention.

They have, since they were instituted, played, occasionally played an important role. In the 1984 battle, something Tony lived through and I wrote about, Mondale made heavy use of early commitments of superdelegates as a way of showing a tally of himself ahead after Hart surged to win New Hampshire, and they worked the superdelegates very hard.

Typically, if one candidate is winning decisively in the primaries and caucuses, the superdelegates will just follow.

But in the right kind of circumstances, with a multi-candidate field managing to stay in the race and then maybe with new information emerging about the front-runner, that leads party professionals to want to reconsider. You've got a fifth of the delegates who are potentially available for that kind of reconsideration.

MR. NESSEN: Let's take one or two more questions.

Gary.

QUESTION: Thanks. Gary Mitchell from the Mitchell Report. Listening to this this morning, I want to say at the outset, I thought that the scenario that Tom laid out, and I'm not saying "prediction," but the scenario that Tom laid out suggests to me that there's a decent chance that 2004 might disprove everything we think we know or presume about front-loading, and with that in mind, let me go ahead and come at the question this way.

And that is, are we in search of fixing the right problem? And I guess I would say, Are we trying to create a situation in which we get better and more seasoned candidates?

Are we trying to get a situation in which we learn more about them? Or are we trying to broaden the voter franchise?

It seems to me that if, without having read the book but listening a bit to the notion of how you might fix this, you clearly would fix a third of those problems, broadening the voter franchise, in theory, by stretching out the calendar.

The question, it seems to me, is whether you substantively get at the second of those, really knowing more about them, and more importantly, ultimately, I think, a system that produces better, more seasoned candidates.

MR. NESSEN: Okay.

MR. MANN: I think that's a good way to put it. I strongly put myself on the side of wanting to maximize the probability of able people contesting for and ultimately winning our presidential nomination. So I think the objective of widespread public participation is secondary and potentially a means to an end, but it's not the highest priority in and of itself, which is why I'm attracted to various ways in which different tests are created for candidates: passing muster with one's political peers, demonstrating a capacity to energize activists, showing broader appeal with ordinary voters and the like.

And I think a fair statement of Bill's analysis and prescription is that he has those broader objectives, multiple objectives in mind as well. This is not a book that champions widespread public participation for its own sake. It is a concern that a set of complex developments, individual incentives have created a process and a calendar that, in turn, leave us not destined to nominate inadequate candidates, not guaranteeing early and precipitous closure, but that has tendencies in this direction, that puts more of a premium on ready cash than we would like to see, that has a little less of a deliberative quality than we would like to see.

MR. MAYER: Of the goals you mention, I don't know that any are terribly well-served by the current process, and I, I think share Tom's thought, that it'd be nice to move back towards a system where, you know, party leaders had a little more of a share in the process.

I'm not sure, you know, once you've let loose the genies, I don't know how you get 'em back in the bottle. So it's a tough--that part of it is a tough thing to say.

What I think I would say is if we are going to have the system where, for all practical purposes, you get the nomination by winning the most votes in the

primaries, which is pretty much the way it works, at least we ought to design it so that the voters, the people who are rendering this judgment, have, you know, the maximum amount of time to, and the right circumstances to think about their choices and learn about the candidates, and so forth.

MR. NESSEN: Thank you all for your insights.

We will begin next Monday to see how the front-loaded system works this year.

The book is for sale across the hall in the bookstore at a 20 percent discount.