

## **The Anderson-Cost Proposal: A Primer**

### **1. Starting shortly after January 1 (in presidential-election years), local party leaders and grassroots members would select delegates to a Republican Nomination Convention.**

- a. 2/3 to 3/4 of the delegates at this preliminary convention would be chosen through open party meetings.
- b. The remainder would be congressmen, governors, cabinet officials, and RNC members, and those chosen by these Republican Party leaders.
- c. States and territories would have discretion over the specific mix of delegates and the process by which all delegates would be selected.

### **2. These delegates would meet at a Republican Nomination Convention during the week of Abraham Lincoln's birthday (February 12).**

- a. The convention's job would be to select five finalists to compete for the nomination.
- b. Through a series of votes over a series of days, with delegates listing their preferences in order (with 5 points for 1st place and 1 point for 5th), ten potential finalists would be selected.
- c. Each potential finalist's willingness to accept a potential designation as one of the party's five finalists for the nomination would be confirmed.
- d. From the list of ten potential finalists, each delegate would select five candidates, with the candidate listed first getting five points, the second four, and so on. In any given round of balloting, the candidate with the most points would win. After five rounds of balloting, the five finalists would have been determined.
- e. This is a system that builds consensus and favors candidates with broad appeal.

### **3. The nominee would be chosen from these five finalists via open caucuses and primaries based on the rotating regional primary system endorsed by the National Association of Secretaries of State.**

- a. Iowa and New Hampshire would retain their first-in-the-nation status.
- b. The remaining states would be grouped into four geographic regions. A lottery would determine the initial ordering of the states, rotating every four years thereafter.
- c. Each region would vote two weeks after the previous one, with the calendar running from the middle of March to the end of April.
- d. The primaries would be buffeted by six presidential debates -- two to be held between the conclusion of the Republican Nomination Convention and the date of Iowa and New Hampshire votes, and the rest to occur the Monday before each Tuesday primary.
- e. These debates would be sponsored by the Republican National Committee and geared toward voter education.

### **4. A second convention held in the early summer would ratify the primary vote and promote the party to the public at large, like the current convention does.**

a. State parties would retain authority over how delegates for this convention are apportioned based on the primary and caucus vote. They would also retain discretion over how long delegates would be bound by the primary/caucus vote.

b. A candidate must win a simple majority of this convention to be nominated.

**5. This proposal offers numerous advantages to the Republican Party.**

a. *It will save money.* While the party organization will have to spend money to organize local party meet-ups and a national selection convention, the party as a whole will save an enormous amount of money. No longer will candidates be compelled to spend inordinate amounts running television advertisements against one another across fifty states.

b. *It will be more GOP-inclusive.* Right now, too many Republican primary voters are on the outside looking in, never having a real choice in selecting the nominee. Moreover, average voters have no say whatsoever in who is considered a viable choice. These reforms will broaden the scope of participation on both counts.

c. *It will strengthen state and local party organizations.* Right now, Republican voters who want to participate in the political process have little to do with the local and state party organizations. By empowering these organizations to play a key role in the selection of the delegates to the Republican Nomination Convention, grassroots participants will be drawn to them.

d. *It will help the Republicans match Democrats in GOTV.* Stronger local and state party organizations will make it easier for the party to mobilize for national elections. Right now, these efforts are far too temporary and ad hoc, depending upon the actions of the presidential nominee. Stronger state and local organizations would mean that the party would be ready and able to go, regardless of what the nominee's organization does.

e. *It will facilitate consensus.* Right now, the system produces nominees who too often do not appeal to a broad cross-section of the party. This system, on the other hand, will demand consensus: the presidential nominee will eventually be somebody with whom all factions within the party are satisfied.

f. *It will encourage better candidates.* Right now, the nomination process takes longer than the general election campaign. Candidates who cannot take two years off their "day jobs" are thus at a decisive disadvantage. This keeps the "best of the best" among Republicans from participating. By shortening and rationalizing the process, these reforms will make it possible for more would-be nominees to seek the top prize.

**6. How is this proposal different from our *National Affairs* essay?**

a. *We have altered the delegate mix at the Republican Nomination Convention.* In the original *National Affairs* piece, the delegate mix of grassroots picks to party leaders (or their picks) was 10:1 (3,000 to 300). Now, the ratio ranges between 3:1 (2,250 to 750) and 2:1 (2,000 to 1,000), depending upon how states choose to allocate delegates. The reason for this change was to ensure a proper balance between all relevant players in

determining the slate of nominees. The most politically committed members of the grassroots should have a role, but it must not be outsized.

b. *Additionally, we clarify the procedures for selecting these delegates, casting it in the mold of caucuses akin to those held in Iowa.*

c. *We have subtly tweaked the voting procedures at the Republican Nomination Convention, further guaranteeing the selection of finalists with broad-based support.*

d. *We have endorsed the National Association of Secretaries of State's (NASS) reform proposal for the primaries.* In the *National Affairs* essay, we propose that the parties hold their own primaries. This has been judged to be cost infeasible. In the new system, the party will continue to rely on state-sponsored primaries (or low-cost caucuses), rather than holding its own primaries. We think the NASS proposal is a sensible organization of the primary calendar to maximize primary voter participation.

e. *We have eliminated the runoff election.* This follows as a consequence from the adoption of the NASS proposal. If the party is not putting on its own primaries, it will not be putting on runoff elections, either. Thus, in instances where no candidate has won a majority of the delegates to the second convention, the final choice will be made at that convention similar to what would happen under the current system if nobody had a majority.

## Excerpts

--For all intents and purposes, Mitt Romney was the GOP nominee despite winning just a fraction of the party's support when it really counted. The percentage of Republicans who either (a) only voted after the nomination battle was effectively over, or (b) supported somebody other than Romney when the battle was engaged, was 81 percent. Winning the party nomination with, in effect, just 19 percent of support runs the risk of leaving many vital factions within the party feeling cold, and thus not putting their best effort into the general election campaign.

--The current GOP nomination process excludes a large portion of the Republican electorate from making a choice, excludes even more from framing that choice, and hands over too much power to committed Democrats. Thus, it is fair to ask: What Republican would ever have proposed a system like this? Answer: None. In fact, this awful system is the result of failed political experimentation by far-left Democrats!

--We are relying upon procedures that the Republican party utilized for literally a *century* before the old system was blown up by liberal Democrats. County meet-ups to select nominees for party conventions? That's how the delegates that chose Abraham Lincoln back in 1860 were selected. Surely, that cannot be too expensive in this day and age.

--We want to take the best ideas of the three historical nomination systems -- the congressional caucuses, the conventions, and the open primaries -- and combine them. Let's take what history has shown to work, combine them in rational ways, and produce a new system that makes sense.

--Drawing more people into the process will expand the party's pool of potential donors and activists. Just as fiscal conservatives always bemoan the "static scoring" of tax cuts, which fail to anticipate the tax revenue generated from economic growth, we shouldn't have a static view of the party's finances. Altering the power relations in this way will make the state and local parties a real center of activity, making it easier for them to raise more money.

--Shouldn't we expect candidates to try to "game" this system? Definitely! Ever since 1796, ambitious politicians have been angling for the presidency, and they have pursued the office via the rules laid out before them. We are altering the rules here; we should expect would-be candidates to try to work within them to win the nomination. We believe we have set up the rules in such a way that ambitious candidates will have to spend more time interacting with local and state party organizations, and the average Republicans who support them, than with the elite group who today determine which candidates are and are not viable. Put simply, we are not afraid of candidates trying to "game" the system. We are counting on their doing so, and believe that will be essential to its ultimate success.

## **Q&A, Part 1**

### **What's Wrong with the Status Quo?**

#### ***Why does the nomination selection process matter?***

Selecting a presidential nominee for a major party is a very important form of political power. And it has been a bone of contention dating back to the 1820s as to how that power should be distributed. Since the beginning of party competition for the presidency, we have had three nomination systems, each of which distributed that power differently. First was the caucus system (1796-1824), which gave the power to nominate candidates to party members in Congress. Second was the convention system (1832-1968), which gave the power to party conventions. Third is the primary system (1972-Present), which gives the power to voters in primaries and open caucuses.

#### ***What is wrong with the current system?***

We believe that the current system distributes power in ways that are inefficient and exclusive.

Inefficient because it takes too much money, time, and effort for the groups empowered to select a nominee to make their choice. This puts the Republican party at a disadvantage, at least when (as in 2012), the Democratic party is not so encumbered.

Exclusive because it does not distribute the power to choose broadly enough. Too many good Republicans are practically excluded from the process altogether. Meanwhile, other Republicans (and, frankly, too many Democrats!), enjoy a level of power that is incommensurate with their contribution to the party.

#### ***What types of power are we talking about?***

Political power is a very complicated subject; there are different aspects to it that involve us here. First is the power to frame the choice. Second is the power to choose.

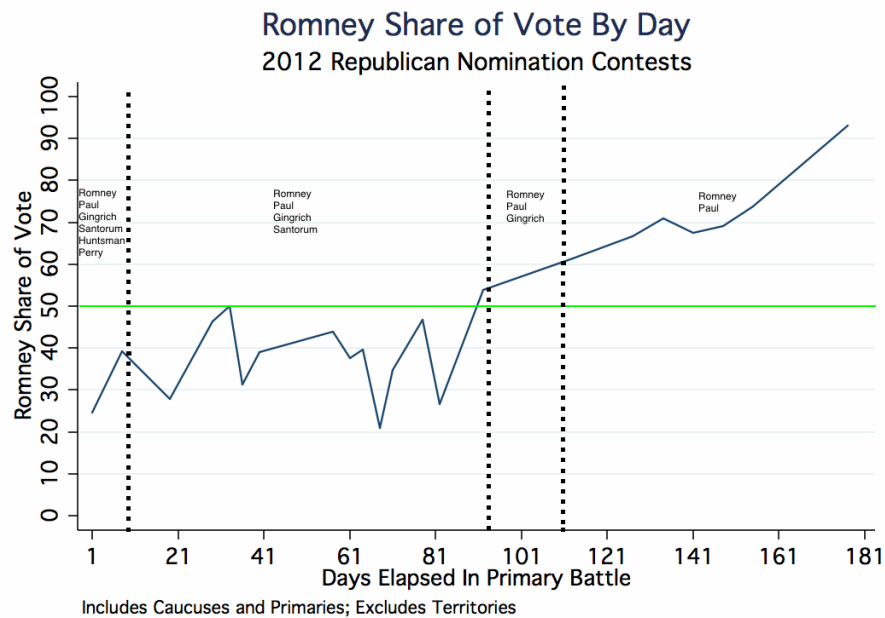
#### ***What is the "power to choose?"***

This is the authority of the Republican electorate to choose between the candidates who are arrayed in front of them. We contend that this process involves too few Republican voters in this process for two reasons.

First, the nomination battle is effectively over before many Republicans get to decide. In 2012, Mitt Romney sewed up the GOP nomination after Rick Santorum withdrew after the Maryland

primary. At that point, states totaling just 48.5% of the Electoral College vote had participated. Thus, approximately half of the country by population did not have a real choice.

Second, Romney's victories up to that point, which had pushed Santorum (and others) out of the race, depended on him getting much less than 50 percent of the total vote. Consider this graph, which tracks Romney's share of the vote in the primaries by day (starting with the Iowa caucus on Day 1 and ending with the Utah Primary on Day 177).



Romney won the nomination not because he was a consensus choice, but because he consistently won a larger share of votes than his opponents. Even so, a majority of Republican voters consistently voted against him until the Maryland primary.

Afterwards, he went on to win super-majorities in

the later primaries, but only because his main opponents had either dropped out (i.e. Santorum and Newt Gingrich) or conventionally been deemed non-viable (i.e. Ron Paul). All in all, Romney won 52.5 percent of the Republican primary vote, but that number depended heavily on him winning big states like California and Texas with 70 percent after the contest was effectively over.

For all intents and purposes, Romney was the GOP nominee despite winning just a fraction of the party's support when it really counted. The percentage of Republicans who either (a) only voted after the nomination battle was effectively over, or (b) supported somebody other than Romney when the battle was engaged, was 81 percent.

This points to the great irony of the modern nomination process. By opening primaries and caucuses to the great mass of the party electorate, it seems more democratic, but this effect is illusory. In fact, only a small portion of the entire party gets to make the real decision about who will be the standard bearer.

***Why is this a bad thing?***

In general elections for most offices in most states, we do not require candidates to win a majority. Instead, they simply have to win more votes than everybody else. Thus, it is fair to ask: why is it OK to have this rule for public offices, but not for the Republican presidential nomination?

The answer is that when somebody wins an office, they acquire all of the powers that the law provides it, regardless of their margin of victory or level of elective support. If you win a four-way race to be a state legislator with only 30 percent of the vote, you still get to vote in the state house as if you won 100 percent. But a nomination does not carry any such authority. All of the power depends upon winning the election, which in turn requires the full effort of the party for the general election. Winning the party nomination with, in effect, just 19 percent of support runs the risk of leaving many vital factions within the party feeling cold, and thus not putting their best effort into the general election campaign.

Moreover, the party nominee is supposed to be the representative of the entire party in the general election: what it thinks about the current state of the nation, how it thinks things can be reformed, and so on. How can a person whose effective support is just 19 percent of the party really claim to speak for the entire party? And if he cannot, then what kind of choice does that give voters on election day?

***And let's not forget about the costs!***

Between the time he declared his candidacy and the time he wrapped up the nomination in early April, 2012, Mitt Romney spent approximately \$79 million; Newt Gingrich had spent \$21 million; Rick Perry had spent \$20 million; Rick Santorum had spent \$19 million; Michele Bachmann had spent \$12 million; Jon Huntsman had spent \$8 million. That is a total of \$159 million spent not fighting Democrats, appealing to independents, or promoting the party's message; this was money spent largely fighting each other, appealing to already-committed Republicans, and promoting themselves.

For a party that hopes to impose fiscal discipline on Washington, D.C., this is an awful waste of money. Surely, there has to be a system that chooses a nominee without costing so much money.

Moreover, most of the nominees had declared anywhere from ten months to a year prior to the Maryland primary, which was just seven months prior to Election Day. So, not only did Republican candidates spend an obscene amount of money fighting themselves, they also spent more time fighting themselves than they did making the case against Barack Obama. There has to be a process that picks a nominee without wasting so much time on a bloody, personal internecine battle.

***What about the "power to frame the choice?"***

For how little influence average Republicans have in actually making the choice, they have even less sway in deciding what the range of choices will be. Who runs for president and who does not? Who is considered a viable contender and who is not? Candidates, naturally, factor heavily into these decisions, as well they should. Even so, there are factions and forces within the Republican party, and the broader political environment, that influence who becomes a candidate and who is taken seriously. Specifically:

(a) Donors. To be an effective candidate, you have to raise tens of millions of dollars just to compete. To do that, there are only about a handful of places you can go: New York, Washington, Los Angeles, Houston, Dallas, Chicago. There, you must curry favor with wealthy Republicans with particular interests and agendas. If you cannot make them happy, you are going nowhere fast.

(b) Campaign Consultants. Running a nomination campaign takes scores of experts, and it is incumbent upon the top-notch candidates to recruit the best pollsters, focus group conductors, speechwriters, managers, and so on. Once again, this is a group whose interests and values must be considered. They have to be comfortable with you as a candidate before you can hire them.

(c) Key Interest Groups. The alternative to raising a lot of money up front is currying favor with interest groups who are well-positioned vis-à-vis the nomination calendar. Usually, that gives special favor to evangelical Christian groups situated in Iowa and South Carolina. If you win them over, you can take a few early states and boost your profile.

(d) The media. Overwhelmingly Democratic and liberal, the media nevertheless has great sway in deciding who is and who is not considered a legitimate contender. Media stories about which candidates are likely to win, and which are likely to lose, create self-fulfilling prophecies, which mean that candidates have to keep Democratic-voting journalists happy. Moreover, the media -- in its never-ending hunger for a story (which usually makes Republicans look bad) -- is always happy to put a special spotlight on fringe candidates with no real chance of winning but who make for good copy.

***What is wrong with these groups having a say?***

It is perfectly fine for GOP donors, evangelicals, and strategists having a role in selecting the nominee. They are all Republicans, and particularly committed ones at that, dedicating their money, talents, or time to the effort. The problem is that their position within the party is incommensurate with their overall role within it. Why should average Republican voters in Circleville, Ohio not have a role in deciding who is and who is not considered a viable



candidate? Why should it be left to wealthy donors in the Upper East Side of New York, evangelical Christians in Ames, Iowa, or the top consultants in Washington, D.C?

Again, this is not merely an issue of basic fairness, which should not be overlooked. There are also the disadvantages that come from a crop of viable candidates who are not necessarily representative of the party at large. If they do not reflect the values and opinions of average Republicans, because they were selected by people whose values and opinions are different in important respects, why should we expect average Republicans to participate enthusiastically in the general election campaign? And if we can't expect them to be enthusiastic, why should we ever expect to win?

It is worth pointing out here that the Republican party is fundamentally coalitional in nature. Sixty-one million people voted GOP in 2012, and they are spread out as far as Nome, Alaska to Key West, Florida, and virtually everywhere in between. While basic principles generally unite the party, there are nevertheless differences in issue-emphases, positions, and perspectives. It is important, therefore, to find a nominee who speaks to as broad an array of people as possible. All of these groups should be involved, but too many other groups are excluded from the very important process of figuring out who is and who is not a serious candidate.

***And the media should have no say!***

Remember, these are groups who ultimately vote Republican. We want them to participate. We just want their power to be commensurate with their strength in the broader party. That cannot be said for the media.

How many times in the 2012 campaign did the media frame the debate in ways that made Republicans look bad? How many times did they give incommensurate attention to Republican candidates with no real hope of winning, just because they made good copy? How many times did the media ask questions that were of little or no interest to average Republican voters, just to embarrass would-be nominees in advance of the general election? Empowering the mainstream media to have such a powerful role in the Republican nomination process is tantamount to empowering some of the most committed liberal Democrats in the entire country.

The current GOP nomination process excludes a large portion of the Republican electorate from making a choice, excludes even more from framing that choice, and hands over too much power to committed Democrats. Thus, it is fair to ask:

***What Republican would ever have proposed a system like this?***

Answer: none. In fact, this awful system is the result of failed political experimentation by far-left Democrats!

In the late 1960s the Democratic party was split over the Vietnam War, and the anti-war wing lost the 1968 nomination battle as Hubert Humphrey defeated Eugene McCarthy at the Democratic convention in Chicago. As a sop to the losers, the pro-war Democrats voted in favor of empowering a committee to investigate and propose reforms to the process, which at that point still relied on party regulars at local caucuses and conventions to select delegates for the national convention.

The far-left of the Democratic party seized control over this committee, and managed to push through a series of reforms over the opposition of the regulars (many of whom foolishly decided to stay out of the battle in the hopes of delegitimizing the left). The reformers required caucuses and local conventions to be “open,” in the belief that this would facilitate the efforts of the anti-war New Left in taking over the party. But the party regulars were not going to go down so easily. Even though they lost the battle over reforms, they found a loophole: party primaries. Their thinking was that if they instituted party primaries, the antiwar radicals would be overwhelmed by average Democrats, thus protecting the reputation of the party, not to mention their own power, as party primaries would mean that the antiwar left would have trouble getting control of state and local party organizations.

Afraid that their old system suddenly made them look undemocratic, Republicans quickly followed suit, so that by the 1980s most delegates to both national conventions were chosen mostly through primaries (although some open caucuses remain). Republicans followed the Democrats even though (a) they never had any problems with the old ways and (b) the new system was never intended by anybody. The far-left wanted open caucuses and conventions that they could control; the Democratic regulars wanted the old system of closed caucuses dominated by their supporters. Nobody thought primaries were a good idea. And yet that is what we have!

## Q&A, Part 2

### **How This Proposal Would Work**

*So, how do we fix this?*

There is just about nobody who thinks the status quo is acceptable when it comes to the nomination process. But the number of proposals to fix it are virtually limitless. What we need is a way to evaluate these ideas. Based on what we've just discussed, there are two clear questions to evaluate the reform process.

(a) Does it increase efficiency? That is, does it produce a nominee with less time and money?

(b) Does it promote inclusiveness? Do as many Republicans as possible play a meaningful role, not only in selecting from the list of candidates, but in determining the list of candidates?

These questions are easier asked than answered. In fact, most proposals that have circulated around focus on efficiency rather than inclusiveness, or vice-versa. For instance, plans to [compress the primary schedule](#) -- without other reforms -- would probably make the process more efficient but less inclusive. Money would matter more in such a short time frame, as the nomination increasingly resembles a national primary, thus giving more sway to the financiers of the party. It would also probably assist the media, whose stories of momentum could sway voters as they try to make up their minds in a short time frame. (In addition, compressing the primary schedule -- while retaining the gist of the current system -- would risk producing an insufficiently vetted nominee and hence general election disaster.)

Additionally, other ideas -- like, for instance, eliminating "winner take all" delegate allocations -- would promote inclusiveness, but at the expense of efficiency. If candidates could finish in second or third and still win enough delegates to keep fighting, that would extend the effective length of the contest and probably allow poorly financed candidates to gain traction, all of which is good for inclusiveness. That would drag out the nomination battle, meaning more time and ultimately more money spent fighting each other rather than the Democrats.

Accepting a trade-off between efficiency and inclusiveness is a losing choice. There has to be a way to accomplish these two goals in tandem. The problem with most proposed solutions is that they tinker at the margins of a system that, at its core, sets these two goals against one another. With a process built on sequential primaries, you can either promote efficiency or inclusiveness, but you cannot have both. Altering the sequence, or reconfiguring delegate allocations, or

squeezing or expanding the time-frame, still retains the same basic process, which means you are inevitably trading inclusiveness for efficiency, or vice versa.

And so, we think Republican party needs to start thinking outside the box, and implement root-and-branch reforms. More fundamental reforms of the process are necessary if we are going to make it more inclusive and more efficient.

***“Root and branch?” “Outside the box”? That doesn’t sound very conservative!***

No doubt, and we should be careful not to make the same mistakes that the left made in the late 1960s when it destroyed the old system. If we design something *de novo*, we should not only expect it not to work the way we intended, but also to fail in unfortunate ways.

That is why we want to take the best ideas of the three nomination systems -- the congressional caucuses, the conventions, and the open primaries -- and combine them. Let’s take what history has shown to work, combine them in rational ways, and produce a new system that makes sense. Specifically:

- (a) The primary system, by opening up the presidential-nomination process to a vote, offers the opportunity for as many people as possible to participate in making the final decision.
- (b) The convention system recognized the unique role that party grassroots leaders can and do play in the maintenance of the party’s electoral presence. Accordingly, it gave them unique powers to determine who is and who is not worthy of consideration.
- (c) The caucus system acknowledged the special responsibility of elected members of the party in Congress in forming and maintaining its reputation. It also facilitated a useful link between the eventual president and his allies in Congress, facilitating coordination in enacting the party’s agenda.

Each of these systems had their limitations, which poses a challenge. But on the other hand, each was formed over time to deal with the problems of the previous system. Thus, if we take a mixed approach, we can be successful.

***That sounds awfully ... Madisonian.***

Indeed. Madison and the Framers separated powers between different branches of the government, and gave them different connections to the public at large, to promote the idea of “checks and balance.” It was a way to keep any one group or faction from imposing its will on everybody else. And that is exactly what we should try to do with the nomination process. The

primary, the convention, and the congressional caucus all pose unique dangers to a truly republican nomination process. But if we are careful in the way we combine the three, we can use the strengths of one to check the weaknesses of the others, thus *balancing* the entire regime.

***So how would you combine these systems?***

For starters, we would retain the primary system for the selection of the ultimate nominee. In particular, we endorse the proposal of the National Association of Secretaries of State (NASS) for a [rotating regional primary](#), with Iowa and New Hampshire retaining their first-in-the-nation status. We think this is a balanced and rational way for the primary process to play out; it is substantially better than the ad-hoc scramble between states to position themselves where they think they will have the most impact. That may be good for individual states, but overall it is not good for the party as a whole.

However, we would make an important change. The NASS spreads the nomination battle from March to June. In our opinion, this is an example of trading inclusiveness in exchange for efficiency. A rotating regional primary would help more states participate, but it would infringe on time that now should be dedicated to the general election campaign. Instead, we propose a shorter time-frame. New Hampshire and Iowa would hold their contests on March 15, 2016. The first region would hold its contest on March, 22; the second on March 29; the third on April 5; and the fourth on April 12.

***But wouldn't this simply trade efficiency in exchange for inclusiveness?***

Taken solely by itself, it would. This compressed schedule would resolve the issue of whom the nominee will be among the choices presented to the voters, but it will give a select few (consultants, donors, interest groups, the media) even more power in terms of determining who is and who is not presented to the voters.

It is here that we would make use of the old convention process. The old system where party regulars met to select a nominee had many drawbacks, but what it did was ensure that party members from all fifty states had a say in who the nominee would be. And their level of involvement was dependent not on how much money they contributed, but upon their population. Of course, by excluding the broader public, the old convention system was not particularly inclusive, which is why it finally met its downfall. But with a primary system already in place to make a final selection, we have already secured a role for the larger public.

Instead, we would task a preliminary convention, made up of delegates selected by local and state party organizations, to select five potential nominees who would be the ones to be presented to the broader electorate. Right now, this is a process that is left to a select few groups -- donors,

strategists, journalists, etc. -- but this alternative process would effectively distribute that power to the state party organizations and grassroots Republicans.

***So you are talking about a convention happening before the primaries? How would that work in practice?***

We propose a Republican Nomination Convention to be held starting on February 12, 2016. This convention would be made up of approximately 3,000 delegates drawn in part from state and local party organizations. Their job would be to select five potential nominees via a process similar to that which is commonly referred to as a "[Borda count](#)," a form of voting known for producing consensual choices. In each round of voting, every delegate would rank five candidates from first to fifth; his first choice would receive five points, his second choice four, and so on. The advantage of this system is that it privileges candidates with broad support; those strongly beloved by a few would not be able to defeat a candidate who is the second and third choice of a broad coalition.

There would be a series of preliminary votes for the delegates to get a sense of the relative strength of each candidate. During the last of these preliminary votes, a field of ten prospective candidates would be selected. From this field of ten, the convention would then choose five finalists to be submitted to the primary electorate starting the next month. Five separate votes would be taken to determine the finalists. The delegates would vote, and the top point receiver would be declared a finalist, leaving nine potential finalists. Another finalist would be chosen from the field of nine on the next ballot, and so on until five finalists had been chosen.

***How long would this convention take?***

Historically speaking, the process of selecting nominees rarely lasted more than three or four days. The longest balloting process for Republicans was in 1880, at 36 ballots. Historically, the Democrats took longer because they required a nominee to receive 2/3 support from the convention, until FDR did away with that requirement in 1936.

We think it would take about as long as historical conventions did. Lengthening the process would be the fact that five candidates have to be selected. But, on the other hand, the convention is not tasked with making the final decision about the nominee, so the stakes would be lower.

***But wouldn't this process simply empower fringe candidates?***

We don't think so. Historically speaking, the convention system as practiced by the Republican party tended to produce candidates who were in the middle of the road. The reason why is it required a majority vote from the entire convention. Similarly, the Borda system tends to favor

candidates who have strong support from some factions (who therefore give him 4's or 5's) and moderate support from others (who maybe give him 1's or 2's).

***What happens if there is an incumbent Republican running for reelection?***

By a 3/4 vote at the start of the convention, the delegates could decide to suspend these rules and re-nominate an incumbent president. Moreover, they would have another opportunity at the end of the selection process if they decided they did not like the candidates they had selected to challenge the incumbent president. Again, a 3/4 vote would accomplish that.

We believe that a 3/4 vote is a sensible threshold. Incumbent presidents with the strong support of their party (e.g. Ronald Reagan in 1984 and George W. Bush in 2004) will have no trouble meeting it. Meanwhile, incumbents with weaknesses with one faction or another will struggle (e.g. Gerald Ford in 1976), which we think is a good thing. Incumbent presidents must be held responsible to their party; the party cannot be held hostage to a mediocre president. After all, the party endures for generations after a president has been forced into retirement. A 3/4 threshold protects the right of the party to challenge an incumbent without unduly burdening him with a needless primary battle.

***How would the delegates for this convention be chosen?***

A portion of them would be selected via party meetings at the local level, open to all Republicans in good standing. We think the procedure for distributing delegates should be left up to the state parties, but what we envision is something akin to the Iowa caucus, where local Republicans can evaluate the character and integrity of would-be delegates, discuss the relative merits of would-be candidates, and ultimately select delegates to represent their interests. To drum up interest among would-be caucus participants, we think it advisable for straw polls to be taken, and suggest state parties consider binding delegates to support certain candidates for a specified number of ballots at the convention. That way, local participants feel as though they are not simply selecting the people who will select the candidates, but actually select the candidates as well.

***Shouldn't we expect candidates to try to "game" this system?***

Definitely! Ever since 1796, ambitious politicians have been angling for the presidency, and they have pursued the office via the rules laid out before them. We are altering the rules here; we should expect would-be candidates to try to work within them to win the nomination. And we think this is a very good thing! We believe we have set up the rules in such a way that ambitious candidates will have to spend more time interacting with local and state party organizations, and the average Republicans who support them, than with the elite group who today determine which candidates are and are not viable.

Furthermore, we think the efforts of the candidates will help produce high turnout at the local party meetings to select delegates for the first convention. Again, history justifies this expectation. Would-be candidates will travel around to speak to local groups, try to court local party leaders, and generally drive their supporters to the meet-ups. If enough candidates do that, you will see strong turnout in this process.

Put simply, we are not afraid of candidates trying to “game” the system. We are counting on their doing so, and believe that will be essential to its ultimate success.

***How will these local meetings be paid for?***

The Iowa Caucuses use a combination of state in-kind support (through free use of government buildings), general donations, and contributions from caucus participants. That fundraising strategy will work nationwide.

Moreover, it is important to consider that the cash constraints of state and local parties inevitably traces back to political power, which has largely been taken from them. State and local parties used to house the nominating power, and so they were naturally a hub of activity, and had little trouble raising necessary funds. The onslaught of national primaries has largely sapped this power from the states and especially the localities, which means they do not attract grassroots attention.

Our reforms would empower state and local party organizations to select the five nominees. This would invariably draw in local Republicans to participate, and make it correspondingly easier for state and local parties to raise funds -- not only for running the caucuses, but also for their electoral campaigns as well.

***What is to stop the local caucuses from being taken over by extremists?***

This is a legitimate worry. Something like this happened in 1964, when Barry Goldwater won the nomination without much support from the party elite or the broader electorate. Instead, he carried favor with the activists on the local level.

To prevent this from happening, only a portion of the convention delegates will be chosen via the grassroots activists who will surely have a strong role in the caucus process, just as they do in most caucuses today. Instead, each state will have discretion to allocate delegates to a certain degree. More than 1/2, but no more than 2/3, of a state’s delegates should be selected through open caucuses or conventions. In addition, every Republican member of Congress, high-ranking officials in the executive branch, and member of the Republican National Committee, would be a delegate. Remaining delegates would be selected via a caucus of these party leaders.



It is here that we draw heavily on the idea of the original congressional caucus system for nominating presidents. The originators of American parties ultimately entrusted their presidential nominee to those with the greatest stake in the party's success. While we should rightly make the process more inclusive than that, there is wisdom in giving great weight to the views of the party's officeholders.

Thus, each state delegation to the national nominating convention would be a mix of delegates chosen by the broader party electorate, party leaders, and delegates selected by those leaders. Just like the presidency, the Senate, and the House were supposed to balance each other in terms of their relationship to the broader electorate in Madison's original design, so this mix of delegates ensures a balance in the views represented at the convention.

***So the convention would finish its work around February 15th, and the first primary would be held in Iowa and New Hampshire on March 15th. How is that enough time for a candidate to form a campaign organize, fundraise, and run advertisements for the primaries?***

It isn't, which we think is a very good thing. Our system would de-emphasize the primary campaign that has saddled the country. What we have right now is a process that mimics the general election campaign, one where candidates curry favor with interest groups, raise money, and then attack their opponents. This is part of the problem of efficiency which we discussed above. At the end of the day, these would-be Republican nominees are allies; they should not be fighting each other, especially not with just a few months until the general election; and the party should have a campaign process that discourages that.

That is our goal. Instead of a general-election-style campaign melee, we want to encourage a national "conversation" among Republican leaders, donors, activists and voters. The lynchpin of this would be six presidential debates between the five candidates. The first would be held on Monday, February 29, with another to follow every two weeks, meaning that the day before each region voted there would be a presidential debate between the candidates.

In this way, the debates should come to dominate the public discourse. Moreover, by only inviting the five, party-endorsed nominees, every candidate would have more time to explicate his views. There would be fewer "fringe" candidates drawing attention to their hopeless quests.

***How do you keep the media from hijacking the debates?***

The key is that the Republican National Committee would co-sponsor it and would make sure that the debate moderators appreciate that this is not an opportunity for them to create trouble for the party or drum up ratings. Instead, the goal would be more akin to the presidential debates --

to genuinely inform the Republican public at large. As such, each candidate along with the RNC should have a say in who is selected to televise and moderate the debates.

Moreover, the party should consider adjusting the debate format. Why focus on 90 second points/counterpoints that inevitably overemphasize conflict without necessarily promoting voter education? There are a variety of ways to conduct a debate, and as the sponsor of the debate, the party would have greater latitude in creating a forum to educate Republicans about the relative merits of each candidates.

***How would the primary votes actually be counted?***

Primary voters all across the nation would cast their votes nominally for a candidate, but in fact their vote would go to allocate delegates for a *second convention*, to be held in the summertime, similar to the way the current system operates. This second convention would be like the convention we know today -- the three-day party advertisement that essentially ratifies the decision of the primary voters. As for the specifics of delegate allocation based on the primaries, the length of time each delegate is bound to his candidate, and so on, these are all decisions that are now rightly left to the states. We would retain that process.

***What happens if nobody wins a majority in the primaries and caucuses?***

Unfortunately, a primary runoff between the top vote-getters is unfeasible, as it would require all states and territories to put on another caucus or election to select the victor. Instead, we would rely on the second convention to make that choice. In our system, its rules would basically parallel the current national convention when it comes to determining who is the nominee: primaries and caucuses would allocate delegates based upon a candidate's public support; state rules would determine how long the delegates are "bound" to their candidate; members of Congress and the Republican National Committee would possess automatic delegate status and come to the convention unbound.

If no candidate can win a majority in the primaries and caucuses, then the second convention would feature the kind of debate, discussion, and even horse-trading that conventions in days gone by made use of (e.g. offering the vice presidential slot to a losing faction). This happened with some regularity before the advent of the modern system, and the party was not worse off for it. One advantage in the modern day is the public opinion polls. If no candidate has a majority, delegates will be able to at least get a sense of how Republican voters feel about the crop of candidates *after* the primaries and caucuses are over.

To facilitate this process, we would advise moving the second convention to late June or early July. This would ensure that the final nominee would still have about four months to mount a general election campaign.

## **Q&A, Part 3**

### **The Big Picture**

#### ***Is this cost-feasible?***

We think so. For starters, consider the costs to the Republican party at large. As noted above, in 2012 alone it spent upwards of \$150 million during the primary battle. And that was just among the candidates themselves. Only a fraction of this would be spent under this proposal. Sure, candidates could (and many would) run advertisements to promote themselves, but with a debate-centered discussion you would not need so much money to win. This is money that could then be redirected to other efforts.

Of course, this is money that is “out there” in the universe of Republican donors and activists. It would not necessarily accrue to the party organizations to manage this nomination battle. More money would be freed up by liberating the candidates from advertisement-heavy campaigns, but that might not necessarily mitigate the costs the party organization must bear. That is why we have developed a program that relies or expands upon existing, low-cost institutions like open caucuses to select the delegates for the first convention, which need not be the grand, expensive affair that the second convention is.

Moreover, we are relying upon procedures that the Republican party utilized for literally a *century* before the old system was blown up by liberal Democrats. County meet-ups to select nominees for party conventions? That’s how the delegates that chose Abraham Lincoln back in 1860 were selected. Surely, that cannot be too expensive in this day and age.

Above all, it is important to remember the bigger picture when it comes to money. Drawing more people into the process will *expand* the party’s pool of potential donors and activists. Just as fiscal conservatives always bemoan the “static scoring” of tax cuts, which fail to anticipate the tax revenue generated from economic growth, we should not have a static view of the party’s finances. Altering the power relations in this way will make the state and local parties a real center of activity, making it easier for them to raise more money.

#### ***Is this practical?***

That is certainly our goal. That is why, for instance, we rely on the proposal from NASS. That has been vetted by the people with the greatest knowledge about primary elections. It is also why we rely on the tried-and-true method of local conventions and caucuses to select delegates to the first convention. But there is another point to be made: many of these details are flexible. Recall what we mentioned earlier: our goal should be to promote efficiency and inclusiveness. We think

this program does exactly that, but it could be altered to reflect political, social, or economic reality.

***Will people actually participate?***

We think so. Again, everything gets back to the issue of *power*. People participate in politics insofar as they think their participation influences the final outcome, i.e. the extent to which they think they have power. This proposal would distribute a great deal of power -- currently consolidated in the hands of donors, consultants, and the media -- back to the party organizations across the country. When these organizations open their doors to Republicans in good standing, we think those Republicans will indeed show up.

It is worth pointing out, again, that historically that is *exactly* what has happened. For a century, the two parties relied on a convention-style process. And for a century, people participated. In fact, in the age of party-dominated politics, voter turnout sometimes hit as high as 99 percent!

***Will candidates participate?***

Of course. The presidency is the most important job in the world. If the Republican party set up the nomination as an ironman competition, you could be certain that senators and governors all across the country would start getting in shape for it! That is how desperate people are to occupy this office.

We think that this proposal will actually make it easier for the most qualified candidates to win the nomination. Because the burdens of the primary campaign are substantially reduced, sitting governors -- so often the best qualified but so often with the least amount of time to spare -- can throw their hats into the ring. Similarly, by “de-politicizing” the primary campaign, this reform would also make it easier for the party to nominate a military general or a cabinet official. And many top-notch potential candidates don’t want to stick their necks out and devote two years of their lives to waging a campaign, but would happily answer the call of duty if formally asked by a convention of their fellow Republicans.

***Would the nominee be in good shape for the general election?***

This is where the rubber meets the road! And it is right to wonder whether the current system offers benefits to the party that might not accrue in a new regime. For instance, the nominee will not have had the opportunity to build a campaign organization for a year, which is one benefit from the current system. He also will not have been vetted by the media as thoroughly, either.

But both of those considerations are not as significant when we look at it more closely. For starters, three of the party’s last four non-incumbent nominees (Bob Dole, John McCain, and

Mitt Romney) were all basically out of cash by the time they won the nomination, leaving them vulnerable to being hammered by better-financed Democrats. What good is a campaign apparatus that has gone dark for lack of funds? Moreover, the media is an unreliable vetter. The case of Mitt Romney is a good example. They held their “best” stuff on him until after he had effectively sewn up the nomination -- because they are Democrats and they wanted to aid Obama’s reelection.

In contrast, the reforms we propose offer real benefits for the general election. Our process would create a consensus choice of the entire Republican party, meaning that fewer Republicans would be left feeling cold by the eventual nominee and more Republicans would be willing to battle for victory in November. Moreover, our process would cost substantially *less* than the current regime, which in 2012 cost upwards of \$150 million. Imagine how well off a nominee could be if, instead of that money being spent in the primaries, people had it to donate for the general election.

Perhaps most important, our reforms essentially reorganize the nominating power -- centralizing it within the national, state, and local party organizations. This will attract grass roots participants to state and local party organizations, thus enabling them to become more active players in the campaign. In the age of the party convention, the candidates usually stayed on the sidelines, and the party organization waged much of the fight. By empowering the party organizations to decide the nominee, you would make them a hub of grassroots interest and, by extension, give them the opportunity to raise more money for the campaign.

In the long run, this will only help the Republican party. Too much of the party’s campaign organization is designed, created, and destroyed every four years by ad hoc presidential campaigns. Each nominee is basically required to reinvent the wheel. There is too little “institutional memory” right now, meaning that inefficiencies are too common (and on full display with Romney’s failed web-based voter contact/tracking program that crashed on Election Day). By contrast, the party organization is a permanent institution, and it can house knowledge that one-off presidential campaign organizations simply cannot.

Imagine an alternative universe where the Republican nominee is greatly assisted by reinvigorated national, state, and local party organizations. There is already an organized grassroots army that the party organizations can call upon. Meanwhile, the party organizations -- because they have become more prominent in the campaign -- are better able to take up the television ad wars to promote the nominee and attack the Democrats while the nominee begins his fundraising push. Furthermore, the party organization already has developed more sophisticated fundraising capacities and can aid the nominee in his effort.

In short: empowering the party organizations will, in the long run, make them a more effective campaign tool than they currently are. They will offer many advantages that today's one-and-done presidential campaign committees now simply lack.

All in all, it's time for the Grand Old Party to embrace a presidential-nomination system of its own design, rather than continuing to use -- or to tweak -- a system designed by and for the Left. A nomination system like the one proposed herein could quite feasibly be implemented, and its advantages would be myriad. It would be far more GOP-inclusive, would encourage better candidates to enter the fray, would facilitate consensus, would strengthen state and local party organizations, would help Republicans match or surpass Democrats' get-out-the-vote efforts, and would cause a great deal of money that's now spent in attacking fellow Republicans to be channeled for use in attacking the Democratic nominee. As such, it would be conducive to victory.