

Approved 2-24-88
Date

MINUTES OF THE Senate COMMITTEE ON Elections

The meeting was called to order by Senator Gordon at
Chairperson

1:30 ~~xm~~/p.m. on February 17, 1988 in room 522-S of the Capitol.

All members were present ~~except~~

Committee staff present:

Theresa Kiernan, Revisor
Myrta Anderson, Legislative Research Department
Phil Lowe, Committee Secretary

Conferees appearing before the committee:

Senator Michael Johnston - State Senate
James Parrish - Chairman Democratic Party
Bill Graves, Secretary of State

Senator Bond moved and Senator Norvell seconded the motion to approve the minutes of February 10 and 11. Motion carried.

SB 582 - concerns presidential preference primary elections. Myrta Anderson gave a brief explanation of the bill and said that the bill provides that on the first Tuesday in April of 1992 and on the first Tuesday in April of each fourth year thereafter there shall be held a presidential preference primary election.

Senator Johnston, the author of SB 582, said it simply states that Kansas would start a new presidential primary election in April 1992 and on the first Tuesday in April every four years following. He stated the cost is always cited as being too expensive but if it were coincided with the other local elections it would reduce the net cost and also it is to be taken into consideration that this primary would only be held every fourth year. He further added that presidential primary would provide a much needed economic boost to the state through increased activities by presidential candidates. He concluded that he hoped the legislature would give this legislation a much more serious look and consideration than it did two years ago.

Mr. James Parrish, speaking as an individual and as State Chairman of the Democratic Party of the state of Kansas, said his comments are not through the sanction of the Democratic state party but are made in an effort to assist the committee in its deliberation and consideration of SB 582. He said that without the presidential primary we are committed to use another system which is the caucus system and which is a complicated procedure. He further added that without the proper administering of this plan we run great risks, and it requires great detail and lots of opportunities for us to fail. Mr. Parrish thought that some of problems of the caucus system would be alleviated by going to the presidential primary system. He further added that he would lend his support to this bill as an individual and as an administrator of the system we have now, and not on behalf of the Democratic party as the party has not spoken. He said he was convinced enough from his experience that he hoped to be able to convince the party that SB 582 will provide us with the better system for the people of the state of Kansas.

CONTINUATION SHEET

MINUTES OF THE Senate COMMITTEE ON Elections,
room 522-S, Statehouse, at 1:30 ~~am~~/p.m. on February 17, 1988

Mr. Bill Graves, Secretary of State, distributed copies of his testimony supporting and urging the favorable passage of SB 582. (Attachment 1).

The Chairman announced that he had heard from Bea Coats, County Clerk from Edwards County and the Legislative Chairman of the County Clerks, and that she stated that the clerks are willing to participate and give their input in regard to SB 582.

The Chairman appointed Senator Virdicksen as Chairman and Senators Reilly and Martin as members of a subcommittee to consider and work out the details of SB 582 and report their recommendations back to the Committee for further action.

The Chairman also announced that next Wednesday, February 24, the committee will hold hearings on SB 601 and SB 619.

The meeting was adjourned.

Bill Graves
Secretary of State



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STATE OF KANSAS

SENATE ELECTIONS COMMITTEE
February 17, 1988

Testimony in support of Senate Bill 582

Mr. Chairman. Committee members.

In past weeks the news media reported stories about a record turnout for the Republican Party caucus. Party officials were elated by the enthusiastic response.

I estimate that participation in the 1988 Republican and Democratic caucuses combined will, perhaps, reach 40,000 people. 40,000. Even those who were pleased with the caucus turnout, know that it was the result of an aggressive campaign on behalf of a native son. Consider what the results might have been otherwise.

Consider, and compare the turnout in this caucus with the turnout in this state's first and only presidential preference primary, a primary that did not feature a native son. 479,316 people went to the polls, making it the largest primary election in state history.

I find it ironic that participation in the primary in 1980 was 12 times that of our record-setting caucus, yet we're here today to debate the merits of a presidential preference primary in Kansas.

Attachment 1

Senate Elections Committee
February 17, 1988

Its merits are evident - a preference primary opens the electoral process to hundreds of thousands of Kansans who want to have a say in choosing our nation's president.

Opponents argue that a preference primary is too costly and weakens the political parties.

The 1980 election cost a little less than \$1.1 million dollars. Perhaps, the most important question that we must ask ourselves today is: What price do we attach to public participation in the democratic process? Based on conversations with county clerks in the past week, we estimate that a 1992 primary would not exceed \$1.5 million.

And keep in mind that a preference primary is not without its monetary benefits to Kansas. The candidates' campaigns generate television, radio and newspaper advertising. Presidents Carter and Reagan, along with George Bush, John Anderson and Edward Kennedy all campaigned here in 1980.

Costs may also be reduced by combining the preference primary with city and school district elections in the spring. Not only would combining the elections reduce the cost of a preference primary, it would result in a much higher voter turnout for these important local elections.

Evidence from the 1980 election shows that a preference primary will strengthen, rather than weaken

the political parties. Party registration increased by almost 10 percent before the 1980 primary and the number of unaffiliated voters fell. Overall, voter registration increased by 88,700 as unaffiliated voters choose to affiliate with a political party and as some Kansans registered for the first time. The net result was that we registered twice as many people in 1980 than will participate in the 1988 caucuses.

Primary elections are used in the selection of party nominees in every political race in Kansas, except that of president. Why should the decision about who will be the candidates for the most important position in our country be left to a handful, especially when Kansans continue to express their interest in a preference primary.

Following the 1980 primary, a survey conducted by the Topeka Capital-Journal revealed that 57 percent of the respondents believed the preference primary should be continued. At the State Fair last year my office polled people on five issues, including the preference primary. The poll was informal and unscientific, but its results left no doubt about the viewpoint of a majority of the respondents: Kansans voted 3-1 in favor of a preference primary.

I urge favorable passage of S.B. 582.

Everything about Iowa is more than a little nuts if you ask Slats Grobnik

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Chicago—On Iowa's big day, I asked Slats Grobnik what he'd do if he lived in that state.

"I'd move."

What I meant was, which presidential candidate would you vote for?

"Nobody. I'd stay home and feed the pigs and talk to the chickens, or whatever they do for kicks in Iowa."

But what about your responsibilities as a concerned citizen to participate in the electoral process?

"You don't understand. I'm a mainstream kind of guy, see."

What does that mean?

"It means that if you want to be in the mainstream in Iowa, you don't do nothing except maybe turn on the tube and watch all the TV newsies yapping about why the guy who finished third did better than the guy who finished first."

But how can you be in the mainstream if you don't participate?

"Because that's what 90 percent of the people in Iowa do. Or don't. You got about 2 million people living in that state. But only 10 percent of them go to these caucus things."

That may be true. But the entire nation watches because what these 10 percent think is so politically significant.

"Who says it's so significant?"

All the political experts, the commentators, the pundits, the TV anchormen.

"Yeah, that's because they got to write about it and talk about it. You expect any of them to say: 'Hey, here I am in Iowa, and this thing don't mean much but I'm getting paid a lot of money to be here, so will all of you stay tuned and listen to what I think?' Course not. They say: 'Hey, this is so exciting. Gephardt just picked up two points in the polls.'"

Well, those shifts in voter sentiment can be significant.

"Oh, sure. It means he's gonna get about 40 more votes. You ever figure it out, there are 50 wards in Chicago. And the whole caucus thing in Iowa for both parties will add up to about three of our wards."

Yes, but recent history has shown that Iowa can be a harbinger of things to come.

"That's what they always say on

know what a harbinger is. It sounds like some kind of bird. Why do TV newsies talk that way?"

Because it's easier than thinking. But as the pundits point out, Iowa was where George McGovern took his first big step from the shadows toward the nomination. Jimmy Carter leaped from obscurity in Iowa. It was in Iowa that Gary Hart was thrust into the spotlight.

"Yeah? Well, what that tells me is that Democrats ought to stay out of Iowa if those are the kinds of losers it gives them. So four years ago, 20,000 rubes in Iowa thought Gary Hart was hot stuff because he combed his hair like John Kennedy. If you look at the whole country, how much is 20,000? It's about one-tenth of one-tenth of one-tenth of one-tenth of the whole population. That won't even get you elected alderman in my ward."

You're missing the point. A strong showing in Iowa tells the rest of the country that a candidate has the capacity to move the hearts and minds of those in the heartland.

"You're talking like them TV newsies again. How come you have to wear bib overalls and raise pigs to be in the heartland? Why can't some guy who lives upstairs of a tavern in a big city like my brother Fats be in the heartland? Why don't those candidates ever go see someone like him for the network? Why do they always go see a farmer or a guy having coffee in some small-town diner? Just once, I'd like to see someone like Paul Simon go up to the corner dope pusher and ask him what he thinks about the economy."

Whatever the reasons, a strong showing in Iowa could be a precursor of a candidate's growing strength.

"A precursor? What happened to the harbinger and the portent? Are they already in New Hampshire?"

In other words, an indicator.

"So whoever wins Iowa is going to be the guy in front?"

Not necessarily. If someone finishes a surprising second to someone who finishes a predictable first, then the surprising second could be considered a bigger winner.

"That's what I mean about all the political newsies being a little nuts."

Why do you say that?

"Go put on the gloves with someone like Mike Tyson, then tell me how good it feels to finish a surprising



Mike Royko