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Western Presidential Primary Update

Montana

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It is very likely that Montana's legislature will introduce a Western States Primary Election bill when its session begins on January 3. Legislation could move Montana's presidential primary election from June to February for the 2008 election – and in line with primaries in Utah, New Mexico, and Arizona. Although a 2005 bill died in the Montana Senate, legislation this year appears to have stronger bipartisan support, including that of Democratic Governor Brian Schweitzer and Republican Secretary of State Brad Johnson.

In March 2006, Governor Schweitzer attended a bill signing in Utah authorizing a Western Presidential Primary Election for February 5, 2008. "We don't believe in the West that we ought to let Iowa, New Hampshire, and South Carolina pick our presidents," said Schweitzer (<http://www.kcpw.org/article/183>). Secretary of State Johnson, who attended a presidential primary symposium in Salt Lake City this fall, agrees. "Montanans deserve a greater voice in choosing Presidents," said Johnson. "These days, the major parties have often chosen their candidates before the first Montanan casts a vote in the primary election. By working together with my Democrat and Republican colleagues in other Western states I want to enact policies to make sure all voices are heard" (<http://sos.mt.gov/News/archives/2006/September/09-27-06.htm>).

Montana, along with other Western states, has become a fly-over region – meaning presidential candidates simply fly over the Intermountain West on their way to and from California. Supporters believe that will change in 2008 with the creation of a Western States Presidential Primary election. To track legislation in Montana during the 2007 Session, visit [http://laws.leg.mt.gov/pls/laws07/law0203w\\$.startup](http://laws.leg.mt.gov/pls/laws07/law0203w$.startup).

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