

### Will States Resist Movable Primaries?

An objection to the American Plan that is sometimes raised is that changing the primary dates every four years will be a hardship on states' electoral systems. But, what is the actual history? Have primary dates been set in stone?

Figure 1 shows that since 1988, the percentage of states in either party changing their dates from one cycle to the next has averaged 40%. In no party's cycle has the rate of date shift been less than 30%, and in 1988, 60% of Republican primaries and caucuses were

shifted from their 1980 dates (Ronald Reagan was unopposed in 1984).

Figure 2 shows how often states have changed the dates of their primaries and caucuses for either party. The mean number of changes is 3.7 per 5 cycles. In fact, Kansas and Minnesota have had a date shift in at least one of the parties in all 5 cycles studied, and in Missouri the Republican date has changed in every cycle.

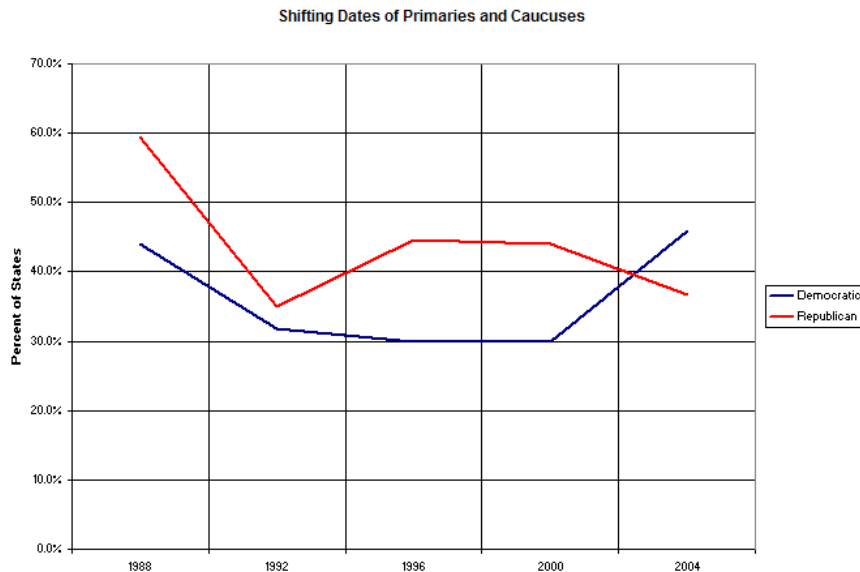


Figure 1

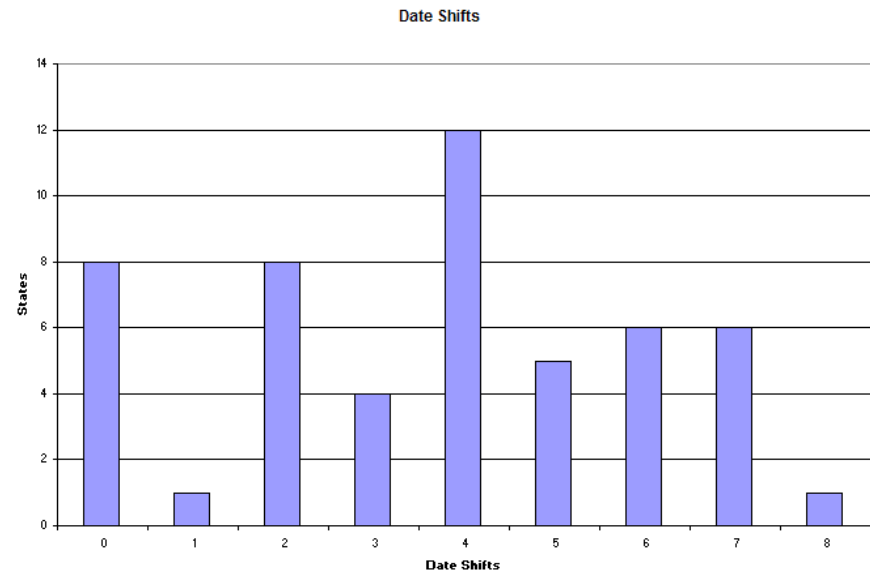
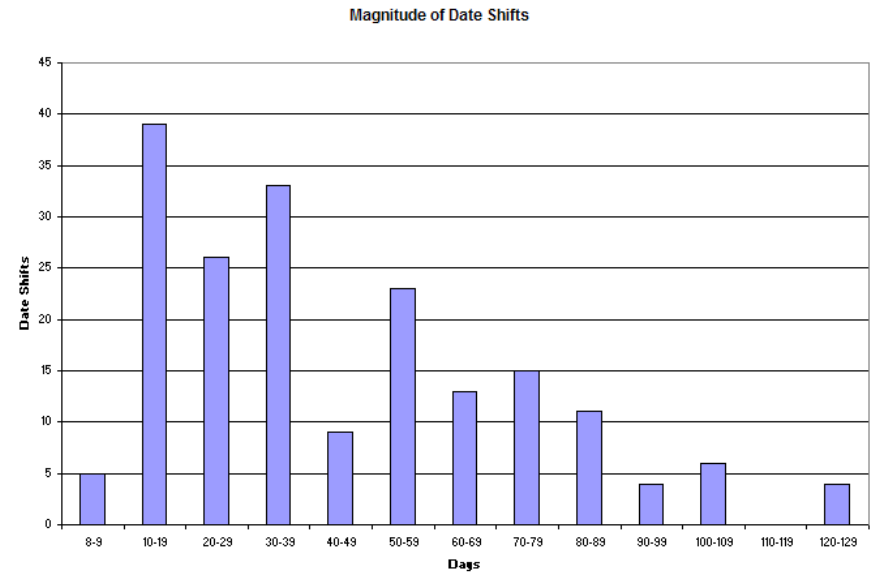


Figure 2

Figure 3 shows the distribution of date shifts by magnitude. The median change in a primary or caucus date is 35 days. In other words, in any cycle and in any party, any given state can be expected to change its primary or caucus date by five weeks.

All told, the data disproves the idea that states, and more importantly voters, would not respond well to a system that mandates the movement of primary and caucus dates. This is quite simply a myth. States do it all the time, and voters are already acclimated to it.



**Figure 3**

For more information, visit [www.americanplan.org](http://www.americanplan.org)

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